

THE PENGUIN NEW WRITING



EDITED BY
JOHN LEHMANN



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32

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About the new contributors

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ALAN PRYCE-JONES was born in 1908. He began work as assistant editor of the *London Mercury* in 1929, and his first book *The Spring Journey* was published in 1932. Since then he has published four other books, and written frequently for the *New Statesman*, *Horizon* and the *Observer*. He is now on the staff of *The Times Literary Supplement*.

IAIN SCOTT-KILVERT was born in London in 1917, and was educated at Harrow and Cambridge. He spent five years of the war in the Near East, serving as a major in the Intelligence Corps. He was parachuted to Greece in 1944 and remained there for two years. He now works for the British Council.

BERNARD SPENCER has been a schoolmaster in preparatory schools. He joined the staff of the British Council shortly before the war, and during the war years worked in Central Europe and Greece. He was forced out of Greece by the German invasion and, for a time, joined the English staff of the Egyptian University of Cairo. He was founder and co-editor of *Personal Landscape*, and has contributed to many anthologies. His first collection of verse, *Aegean Islands*, was published recently by Poetry (London) Editions.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE, critic, journalist and broadcaster, was born in London in 1911, and educated at Charterhouse and Balliol College, Oxford. He studied theatre and music at home and abroad, and is at present dramatic critic of *Time and Tide*, *The Listener* and *The Manchester Guardian*.

MICHAEL AYRTON was born in 1921, and educated in London, Vienna and Paris. He is well known as one of the leading painters of the younger generation, and has exhibited his work at the Leicester and Redfern Galleries in London, and in exhibitions organized by the Arts Council. He also has a distinguished reputation as a book illustrator and a designer of stage *décor*.

FOREWORD

At a time when austerities are on the increase everywhere on the Eastern side of the Atlantic, the absence of the colour plates, which were one of the most popular features of last year's *Penguin New Writings*, may appear to be only another example of the shy buds of the post-war Spring being rudely nipped by our late frosts. We have, however, decided to leave them out for quite other reasons: it is not this time a question of hard currencies or soft ministerial brains. To begin with, we hope to keep the issues more closely to schedule in future, and the manufacture of the colour-plates has been one of the most important causes of delay in the past. The limited capacity we have in this country for first-class colour-reproduction is still over-taxed, nor does the load show any signs of growing lighter; and the long months during which the original paintings lurk in the printers' laboratories have not improved the relations between *Penguin New Writing* and the owners of the paintings, patient and generous though they have shown themselves in almost every case. What has weighed even more in our decision is the factor of price. Costs of printing and paper have been steadily rising since the war, and the publisher cannot promise that he can keep indefinitely to the present price in our national condition of all but bursting inflation. But he would certainly have had to raise it already if we had kept the colour plates; and rather than do that publishers and editor have agreed to substitute, for the time being at least, an enlarged photogravure section. We hope this will mitigate the loss, more than a little; but we are sorry, because such obstacles are placed in to-day's Bedlam world against the movement of art across frontiers, that even colour reproductions, imperfect though they are still bound to be in half-tone process, go a long way towards helping out the occasional officially sponsored exhibitions in the

international commerce of creative minds. *Penguin New Writing* crosses many frontiers; and even if it cannot for a while be among those few admirable periodicals which travel with colour plates of our modern painters under their covers, it can continue to play its part in many other ways in keeping alive the idea of the United Nations of Art, and in showing that Britain is still among the Great Powers there though her troops have come home from many of their traditional outposts and her coal no longer keeps the transport and industry of the world running.

JOHN LEHMANN

We very much regret that in No. 29 we ascribed the "Portrait of a Soldier" to Maurice Lindsay, when the artist in fact was Alan Lindsay.

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P. H. NEWBY

KHAMSEEN

She, a plump little lady in black whose feet did not touch the ground when she sat upon her divan, was indignant at the idea. 'My servant is a dependable Berber. He is devoted to me. There is no shortage of servants for those who are prepared to pay.'

'An act of graciousness in memory of my late master, your lord and husband,' pleaded Hassan. 'I have divorced my wife and she has now no right in the child. If the woman comes she is to be told that all my rights have been made over to you. The child is yours to give or to keep, to do what you will with. I am fond of the child though it is weakly——'

The Widow silenced him. 'I know what you men are. One wife one week, another wife the next, yet another in the third week, and another in the fourth. Then you re-marry your first wife and so it goes on. Tell me,' she said, settling her jaw complacently into her many chins, 'do you think I am a fool? I treat your miserable daughter Fawzia as my own daughter, I fatten her like a chicken, I educate her, I lead her into the proper paths of life, I dress her in good clothes. What then? You marry your wretched wife again and demand the return of your daughter. It is fair neither to me nor the unfortunate child.' She looked through the open door at the child who, not venturing to enter the flat, stood scratching herself on the landing. 'However, if there is a quarrel between you and your

wife I am no party to it. The child shall stay and serve me.'

At the end of the first week the Widow Hamed was startled to observe that the child Fawzia was eating as much food as Salih, the Berber servant, and herself put together. In a fortnight the girl was beginning to look her twelve years whereas previously she might have been seven or eight. The Widow Hamed had the impression that Fawzia was constituted differently from normal human beings and the gobbled rice, with no preliminary process of digestion, flowed into the cheeks and limbs like water into a goatskin.

At the end of a month Fawzia was a plump and self-possessed young woman whose special passion was to answer the telephone. At the first tinkle she would flash out of the kitchen, race along the passage and spring on to the chair under the instrument, for she was still not tall enough to reach.

'Yes, who is that? This is the house of the lady Hamed,' she would deliver in a tone of great authority and her contempt was great for those who, in telephoning, showed inexperience and nervousness so that they repeated their enquiry several times.

'This is Fawzia,' she would say, 'speaking from the house of the lady Hamed.'

The Widow was not ill-pleased. She saw to it that Fawzia was always clean and garbed her in a scarlet dress that trailed on the ground. But, given the materials, Fawzia took herself in hand. She treasured every scrap of clothing that the Widow gave her and had a washing day three times a week. She had, for a short time, attended school and now demanded books that she might learn to read. She slept on the floor in a corner of the kitchen, for Salih the Berber, a gentleman of means and independence, did not sleep on the premises. His bad Arabic amused her. He always mixed his genders and spoke to the Widow Hamed as though she were a man and of himself as though he were a woman.

Fawzia had changed so greatly that when her mother, having discovered where she lived, came to call she did not at first recognize her daughter. She was so impressed that, forgetting her real reason for coming, she could only think of enticing this fine young woman away. From now on Fatma was obsessed by the idea of once more gaining possession of her daughter; such a beautiful girl could obviously be the source of revenue and it did not occur to her, so narrow was her intelligence, that once Fawzia left the Widow Hamed's she would revert to what she had been before.

In any case Fawzia's mind was made up. 'No, I shall stay and shall not go. You left my father and me. You are old, ugly and dirty and he has forbidden me to see you. You are here in secret and I shall not go with you.'

The Widow Hamed dangled her plump legs and maintained an inscrutable neutrality. From this time on Fatma's mind was occupied with plans for kidnapping her daughter. For she planned to marry once more.

For Fawzia the Widow was not an individual living and breathing, she was part of the incomprehensible circumstance of life. It was enough for Fawzia that certain orders were given which had to be obeyed. When the Widow smiled she was not frowning or swearing; when she was swearing she was not laughing. But her laughter or her abuse was no more human than the wind when it blew dust into Fawzia's eyes or the sun that burned her skin. The Widow clapped her hands. The sound was like the crack of a small cannon. Fawzia scampered along the passage. But the Fawzia world, the flowering of consciousness that was Fawzia, lay like a frozen lake beneath the moon. The awakening did not come from the Widow Hamed.

Salih the Berber was an old man from foreign parts; even his language was different. But Fawzia found herself chattering to him with such enthusiasm that she would break

off in the middle of a sentence and stare at him; the situation would hang in mid-air like a staircase in one of those derelict houses in Old Cairo. Her pause was entirely one of fear. She felt an essential part of her flowing out into the kitchen which, if she was not careful, the Berber would snap up and use for his own purposes. She found herself talking to him with such glibness that she wanted to clap a hand over her own mouth. Wasn't she doing the unmentionable thing?

Salih himself would open his thick negroid lips and put some emanation of himself into the room. In reality he was no more than forty but to Fawzia he was very, very old; he was foreign and ancient.

It was all very improper and dangerous.

If he found her with a book. 'You think to grow wise and be one of the governors of the land that you are occupied with what is marked on paper?'

Fawzia had her answer. 'Old man, do you think it is necessary to understand the thing marked on paper in order to be one of the rulers of the land?' She would have blasted him with contempt.

Instead, and before she could draw back, she found that they were talking in a new language that disturbed her. It was a language that was not made up of words though it was necessary to utter the spoken Arabic to bring it into being, just as it is necessary for the sun to shine in order to create shadow. When the Widow Hamed received lady guests in her salon and told Fawzia to make coffee the words meant an action, the action led to a certain result; the coffee made and brought in on a blue tray the power of words ceased to operate. Fawzia understood and enjoyed this limited language. But when Salih spoke the words meant something more. It was as though everything in the kitchen, the gleaming pans and the primus stove, the labelled tin of rice and sugar, even the glimpse of the busy street and the men selling paraffin and sugar-cane, everything came alive and took part in the conversation. And

the rice in her belly and the fly on her face, all had developed voices of their own, such a clamour all of them talking together, such a passion they proclaimed, such a sweeping away and a lifting up that there were times when she could have fainted on her feet. Fawzia knew how to respond to orders or to abuse, she could not handle ordinary friendliness.

For this reason she did not care to talk with Salih. She was chiefly happy when sitting at the feet of the Widow and listening to her creaking corsets.

From time to time her father came to see her and sat in the corner of the kitchen where he ate whatever scraps of food it pleased the Widow to give to him. Fawzia was never particularly pleased to see him though she could never resist a little jump of excitement when she opened the door to find him there. After suddenly clutching her to his bony body he would release her and look round for what there was to eat.

One day he began to question her solemnly. 'Do you always run to the door like the wind? Or is it only when you are expecting me? I can hear you running down the passage like a wild thing. Do you recognize my ring?'

She said she always went to answer the door like that.

Hassan applied to the Widow that in future his daughter should be excused the honour of opening the door for guests. 'The woman that was my wife has plans for taking my daughter. If the little Fawzia runs to the door it will be the easiest thing for that immoral woman to catch her by the hair and drag her away.'

'Your quarrel is not my quarrel, Hassan. If the girl is seized it is not my responsibility. Is it not enough that I have taken her, dressed her in scarlet and fattened her like a fowl? Do not talk to me of these things. But I know what it will come to with you. You will marry this woman again and then all the good that I have done for Fawzia will be lost.'

Hassan warned his daughter. 'If you let this immoral

woman your mother take you then I shall come and beat you until your teeth sing.'

Salih the Berber understood the conversation with difficulty, for the father spoke a vicious Cairo argot.

From now on Fawzia always looked through a judas-hole that commanded the landing before opening the door. She wanted to make sure that her mother was not standing on the other side. This was not because she was afraid of her father's threats. If she had been able to explain her caution it would probably have had something to do with the coloured caps that Salih wore. She had already made an attempt to steal one and if her mother took her away the opportunity might not come again.

She noticed it first when Salih was bending down to disengage his foot from the wet rag that he had been swishing over the floor. He was so much taller than she that normally all she could see of his headgear was a spotless white cloth wound several times round his head. She now saw that perched on the very top of his skull there was a coloured cap. She held her breath.

'You're wearing a coloured cap like I've never seen,' she remarked.

Salih straightened himself and wrung out the rag over the sink. 'In my country every man wears such a cotton cap, even the boatmen on the river.'

Although he was not looking at her and was going about his business Fawzia felt a tremor of fear. Salih's mouth always hung open. As he scrubbed away at the top of the table he hissed through his teeth. 'What manner of woman is thy mother?' he asked.

'She's got one eye,' Fawzia replied promptly, and the dear life was being called out of her.

'I've seen your father. It was your father who spoke?'

Salih did not wait for an answer to his question which was indeed not a question but a puff of incense put up into her face, his offering to the moment, to the young woman that Fawzia was, standing there. He did not look at her. He

went out of the kitchen and unpegged some of the washing that was hung on the line across the back verandah.

A silver-skinned onion was lying on the window-sill, glistening in the morning sunlight, and Fawzia could not be content until she had folded her hand round its smoothness. The kitchen was still ringing with the great shout that had gone up. Fawzia did not hear it with her ears but with the core of her being. The metal pots in which they made coffee were tingling with sound.

She could not bear to be alone with Salih ever again. If it were impossible to avoid him she would not talk to him or look at him. As for the coloured caps, she could only hope that he might leave one in the bundle of clothing he left in the kitchen overnight.

The Widow Hamed trotted into the kitchen. 'Girl, I clapped, I even called. Are you deaf? Am I a mountain goat that I can dance attendance upon you? Drop that onion. I've got to eat that.'

In the middle of the Widow's abuse Fawzia smiled up into her face with such wide, unseeing eyes that the Widow caught hold of her and gave her a good shaking. Fawzia followed her back to the salon where they stood side by side watching the traffic through the window. The Widow was aware that the child was looking at her from time to time. Self-consciousness only imposed a heavier immobility upon her marble features and all light died out of her eyes. Fawzia put out a finger and touched the glass in front of her. Her private echoing had died away and the room was filled with the sound of traffic.

'If you were to send Salih away, I could do all the work in this house, lady,' she said.

First the Widow Hamed's lips began to tremble, little pouches appeared in her cheeks, her eyes shrank. Her face turned red with a massive internal chuckle.

Some days later Salih came in from the morning's shopping and found Fawzia where she was alone.

‘Your mother is downstairs and asking for you.’

‘How do you know it’s my mother?’

‘She’s as tall as a stork and she’s got one eye. Besides, she asked me: “Tell my daughter, the girl Fawzia, to come to me.”’

‘I shall not go.’

Salih removed the shopping basket from his side where it had been strapped. Just above his left hip his white *gallabieh* was torn and soaked with blood. ‘Your mother is mad for you. She is a woman with a mad spirit. She has seen that you are beautiful and thinks of nothing, night and day, but how to seize you.’ Because of his extreme short-sightedness he bunched up his eyes and bent his head forward in the child’s direction. There was a string of saliva running down from one corner of his mouth. Even the words that he was enunciating, uncouth and foreign as they were, did not make him any the less a blundering mute.

‘There was a tall man, a Saidi, taller than your mother. He stood up close to me and pressed his knife gently into my side. There! Enough to cut but not to hurt. He told me to come up here and send you down.’ He began taking the vegetables out of the basket with an indifference to the wound in his side that Fawzia herself shared. A large drop of blood splashed on his naked foot. ‘I told them that your father had taken you to another house.’

She suddenly shrieked out at him—or at herself—for there was no way of asking why he had lied on her behalf. She cursed his family and his country. ‘I shall complain to the Lady Hamed. Who are you to interfere with my ways and my family?’

Salih mumbled to himself and began to walk uneasily round the kitchen, but no matter where he placed himself the child turned and faced him. Her face was as crimson as the dress she was wearing. At last he went out of the kitchen and took refuge on the balcony.

Fawzia marched up the passage to interview the Widow

Hamed who was taken aback by her ferocity. 'I am Fawzia and I am myself alone. My mother is below, calling for me, but I will not go, not if she waits until night comes.'

'You are what?' said the Widow incredulously.

For some weeks she was left in peace. Her mother made no further attempt to abduct her and even her father did not come. Her relations with Salih the Berber were less disturbing for after her passionate outbreak he seemed scared to talk to her. Every time she went into the kitchen and Salih invented some pretext for leaving it she burned in triumph. And the Widow had to reprimand her repeatedly for her pert, almost cheeky manner.

'There is no sugar,' she said when the Widow asked for coffee.

'No what?' The Widow allowed herself the luxury of a slight deafness.

'No su-GAR!' Her eyes sparkled to see the old lady's indignation.

She spent some time each day in the washroom dabbing at her hair with water and turning to look at her reflection in the mirror.

'The Lady wants you, Fawzia.'

She took no notice. Occasionally she bewildered him with an unexpected smile. Her ascendancy over the Berber could only be maintained, however, just so long as she did not relax in his company and allow one of those 'ghost' conversations to take place. She racked her head for taunts and insults. Only when Salih was angry did she feel that her own skin contained her. He never swore back at her but the waves of his resentment struck pleasurably against her, sheathing her, armouring her.

'Independent little bitch!' the Widow Hamed called her one day.

It was the day of the end of the world towards the latter part of the *khamseen* period. From early morning the sky

had, instead of its normal blue, been a pearly opaqueness which settled down no higher than the wheeling kites. The wind rose. By the middle of the afternoon the city was blanketed by a freak sandstorm of such density that there was alarm for the Day of Judgment. The walls, chairs and tables were sweaty to the touch. Even within the shelter of the house it was as though a dozen men had been beating a dozen dusty carpets. The Widow lay on her divan with a wet handkerchief spread over her face. The windows had the brilliant amber of traffic lights. Everywhere shutters clapped, doors slammed, windows rattled. Salih lay on the floor of the kitchen with an old *gallabieh* wound round his head. Fawzia herself was excited.

The storm was beginning to lose its ruddy colour, was turning to milk and gritty air in the streets and *midans*, when there was a ring at the door and Fawzia looked through the judas-hole to find her father gesticulating on the landing. He burst in on them with a great roar of laughter, waving his arms in the air, snapping his fingers, capering, dancing, swaying from the hips, singing.

'You hashish-mad fiend,' shouted the Widow who had removed the wet handkerchief from her face.

'No, not hashish,' he declared happily. They then had time to notice that he was wearing a new gown, miraculously white. On his head was a brand new *tarboosh* that must have cost at least seventy-five piastres. He had been shaved and looked ten years younger. In his hand was a bamboo cane with which he cut the air into slices. His eyes were streaming with tears but this was only due to the grit that had lodged there. 'I'm going to be married,' he shouted like a mad creature.

He was not alone. His antics had taken up so much of their attention that they had not noticed Fawzia's mother standing with her back to the door. She also was wearing new clothes, a black dress with red facings and beads on the hem. Her eyes were heavily marked with *kohl* and there were stains of henna upon the palms of her hands.

She looked at Hassan with a kind of amused contempt; then at Fawzia.

The Widow Hamed rose from her divan with the bemused desperation of the *khamseen*-afflicted. She called God, the husband, the woman, Fawzia, Salih, she called them all to witness that what she had prophesied had come to pass. The gratification almost compensated for her indignation at the cruel way that she had been served. 'So you've come to take your daughter, eh? I know!' The perspiration streamed down her face. 'After saving her from beggary and the brothel and treating her as my own daughter you, in your selfishness, in your greed and hate——' She was choked by a sense of her own clear-headedness, her anger, the clouds of dust that were still swirling round the room.

Fawzia's mother said not a word. Her one black eye was fixed upon her daughter's face and it was not removed.

Fawzia's father was indignant. He went down on his knees. He rose and twirled his cane. How had he been able to foresee that he would win thirty pounds in the State lottery and find that his wife had, all this time, been grieving for him? A man cannot live alone. A daughter belonged to her parents.

The quarrel went on. Salih prepared and brought coffee. The Widow told him to take it back again as she had no coffee to offer to the ungrateful.

'All right,' she said calmly. 'So be it. I cannot keep your daughter if you insist on taking her. It is as I foretold.' She called the girl to her and began to undo the buttons at the back of the scarlet dress. She would have stripped the girl naked and thrust her out of the door with her own hands had not Fawzia's mother started to giggle and the father to protest. He understood that Fawzia could not take away what did not belong to her but she could not walk naked through the streets. If they would wait a few minutes, not more than half an hour, he would go home and fetch a gown, or he would go into a shop

and buy one; and before his wife could stop him he had opened the door and was plunging down the stairs into the *khamseen*. Her manner changed abruptly. She ran after him, waving her arms and wailing in a high tone of desperation. She leaned over the banisters and looked down into the well of the building. The scream she gave was a kind of proclamation of the desperation of her own situation. There was a sudden high cry from the depths below and when the woman, the Widow and Salih reached the entrance hall they found Fawzia's father lying on his face with a knife wound in his back. He was dead and already dusty with the *khamseen*.

It was the beginning of a week of fear. The police came and the police went. Salih could hardly be persuaded to leave the house even to go to the market. As for going home at night that was quite out of the question and the Widow Hamed, who was in any case very glad to have him on the premises, allowed him to bed-down in a spare room. Once, in answer to a ring at the door, Fawzia opened the judas-hole and saw her mother standing there. She snapped the shutter to and went to inform the Widow who began trembling, talked of telephoning for the police but eventually did nothing for fear of exposing herself to ridicule. They saw the woman, from the window, standing on the other side of the street. She looked up, their eyes met, and she smiled with a calm arrogance that seemed to reveal the extent of her power.

The three of them, the Widow, Salih and Fawzia, went to market in convoy and Fawzia's mother made a point of accompanying them, walking in the gutter at their side, saying nothing, but smiling.

'Take her, take her, take her,' the Widow whispered out of the corner of her mouth, but Fawzia's mother shook her head and continued to stare at her daughter. "

Fawzia was amused. She received her mother's attentions with a genial embarrassment that was maidenly. The thought that her mother, by doing nothing at all, by merely

waiting and smiling and watching was exercising such power over the wealthy Widow with her fine furniture, and over Salih with his beautiful cotton caps, could not be anything but diverting.

The Widow now quite openly wanted Fawzia's mother to take the girl away. But Fawzia's mother became increasingly distant and the Widow's alarm increased. She had taken it into her head that Fatma and the man who had murdered Hassan were now planning more than the abduction of Fawzia. Salih had told her that the tall man with the knife would undoubtedly murder them all and rob the flat.

'Fatma, my precious, how are you?' said the Widow. 'You must be sick with grief at the death of your poor husband. I have changed my mind. Fawzia may go with you—and she may keep the scarlet dress. There!' She smacked her plump hands together as though to rid them of dust. 'It is finished.'

Fatma would not consent to sit down. She held her head on one side and glanced her one eye at the ceiling. She threw up her hands in despair of deserving such generosity. 'The child is too precious to you, lady. She must not come to me unless she wants to. That would not be just.'

'Of course she wants to come to you, eh, Fawzia, my jewel?' Her hanging cheeks were waxen under the rouge. 'Tell the child how kindly you will treat her, Fatma, my love.'

Fatma was casual. 'As I've always treated her, no better and no worse. She deserves no better. She isn't even grieved for the death of her father. Look at her laughing! When she comes into my hands I shall break her.'

The Widow laughed shrilly. 'Listen to the dear woman!' She called Fawzia to her and put an arm around her. 'Always joking.' She gave her a little push. 'Go on now, go on, go with your mother.' When Fawzia hesitated the Widow lost her temper and said that was not the gratitude she expected after lavishing the very best upon her.

Fatma said she was not sure now that she wanted her daughter. The child would only be a nuisance after all, especially to someone like herself who was going to be married once more.

‘I will give you a great present,’ the Widow pleaded, but Fatma’s one eye gleamed and she was gone.

The Widow held Fawzia responsible for the danger in which they all lay. She traced Fawzia’s history from the moment she had stepped inside her door, a naked, starved, lousy maggot of a creature, up to her present proud and ignorant defiance of all human feeling in refusing to acknowledge everything that had been done for her. She smacked her soundly about the head and sent her in disgrace to the kitchen. Fawzia darted down the passage, giggling.

That evening, knowing that Salih was laying the table for the evening meal, Fawzia stole into his room and began rummaging among his belongings. The day following the murder he had brought all his possessions in a large basket, swearing that he would not leave the house again except in broad daylight. Fawzia found a spare *gallabieh*, a crimson sash, a couple of pairs of sandals, a Koran, and, what she had been searching for, three coloured caps, fitting one inside the other. She had just put her hand on them when Salih walked into the room and caught her.

He was neither surprised nor angry. ‘Poor child of a dead father,’ he said, ‘take what you will,’ and he would have pressed the coloured caps upon her but she jumped to her feet and, once more, lost her temper. There were tears of humiliation in her eyes. She said that his great age was an offence in the sight of God and gave him no right to persecute her. She ran out of the room. The only place where she could be alone was in the bedroom of the Widow herself. There she went and hid herself under the bed, feeling that she had no longer a mind but only a body or no longer a body but only a mind, a Fawzia of herself that trembled like a steel spring. She wanted to withdraw from

all contact with her fellow humans but even under the bed there was a limit to her retreat. She could go no farther than the wall. Since the duststorm there had been no proper cleaning of the flat and she lay on a drift of yellow powder which, at her slightest movement, rose in the air and set her sneezing. Life had been at its best under her father's beatings and, in thanking his memory, she came for the first time to understand his departure and mourn his loss.

It was her own mother, then, who undid the buttons at the back of her dress and stripped it from her. The Widow stood by seeing herself being deprived of still one more pleasure in life. Fawzia stood in a grey shift, her black hair down to her shoulders, looking into her mother's face with calm and happy eyes. The woman had come provided.

'Take the scarlet dress as a gift,' the Widow urged, but Fatma tossed it into the corner and produced, from beneath her own voluminous robes, another scarlet dress, richer and finer by far than the one that had been discarded. The Widow admired it out of politeness and, had Fatma permitted, would have helped to adorn the child. Fawzia looked at her reflection in the tall mirror that stood in the hall. She stroked her sides complacently but was silent with admiration.

Down in the street the tall Saidi who had wounded Salih and murdered Hassan sat in an *arabiyeh*. Salih accompanied the Widow to the balcony where they looked down on the scene as Fatma and her daughter joined him. The driver was sitting on his seat holding his whip stiffly in the air, the carriage hood was down and they could see the Saidi reclining in exaggerated ease on the seat. Fatma pushed her daughter into the carriage and made elaborate preparations for climbing in herself. But still the Saidi did not move. Even when Fatma was sitting at his side and Fawzia opposite he did not stir a finger or raise his head in acknowledgment of their presence.

Some word must have been given to the driver. He began flogging his starved horses and Salih, acting on an impulse, leaned as far over the balcony as he could manage, snatched his cotton cap from his head, and tried to drop it on to Fawzia's lap.

The whiplash came back, snatched at the cap in mid-air, and hurled it far ahead over the heads of the trotting horses.



EDITH SITWELL

THE BEE-KEEPER

(To Denys and Elizabeth Kilham Roberts)

In the plain of the world's dust like a great Sea,
The golden thunders of the Lion and the Honey-Bee
In the Spirit, held with the Sun a colloquy,

Where an old woman stood—thick Earthiness—
Half Sun, half Clod,
A plant alive from the root, still blind with earth
And all the weight of Death and Birth,

She, in her primitive dress
Of clay, bent to her hives
And heard her sisters of the barren lives

Begin to stir. . . . The Priestesses of the gold comb
Shaped by Darkness, and the Prophetesses
Who from a wingless pupa (spark of gold

In the Dark), rose with gold bodies bright as the Lion,
And the trace of the hand of God on ephemeral wings
To sing the great Hymn of Being to the Lost. . . .

'This Earth is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this earth. . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is incarnate in the body's earth—
O bright immortal Lover who is All!

'This Water is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this water. . . . O the bright immortal
Lover

That is in water and that is the seed
Of Life. . . . O bright immortal Lover who is All!

'This Fire is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this fire. . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in fire and shines in mortal speech—
O bright immortal Lover who is All!

'This Air is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this air. . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in air and is our Being's breath—
O bright immortal Lover who is All!

'This Sun is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this sun. . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in the sun and is our Being's sight—
O bright immortal Lover who is All!

'This Thunder is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this thunder. . . . O the bright immortal
Lover
That is in thunder and all voices—the beasts' roar,
Thunder of rising saps, the voice of Man!
O bright immortal Lover who is All!'

This was the song that came from the small span
Of thin gold bodies shaped by the holy Dark. . . .

And the old woman in her mortal dress of clay
(That plant alive from the root, still thick with earth)
Felt all the saps of Day.

And in the plain of dust like a great Sea
The Lion in the spirit cried 'Destroy—destroy
The old and wrinkled Darkness!' But the Sun
That great gold simpleton—laughed like a boy
And kissed the old woman's cheek and blessed her clay.

The great Sun laughed and dancing over Chaos
Shouts to the dust 'O mortal Lover! Think what wonders
May be born of our love—what golden heroes!'

The Bee in the Spirit said 'The gold combs lay
In the cold rock and the slain Lion amid spent golden
thunders.'

NOTE

Verses 6 to 12 are founded on the great Second Adhyaya of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad :

‘This earth is the honey (madhu, the effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey of madhu, the effect of this earth. Likewise this bright immortal person incorporated in the body (both are madhu). He indeed is the same as that Self, that Immortal, that Brahman, that All, etc. etc.

I have founded the lines on this great Hymn, with all possible reverence.

E. S.



NIGEL HESELTINE

A DAY'S PLEASURE

Tempers cooled suddenly, but rose again and burst like the pomegranates on the wallpaper, scattering the seeds of dispute about the house. We were going on a day's pleasure, the house was too full, my mother was bilious, the car would not start for my father but roared for a moment in the yard, then spluttered and stopped.

There were already in the house, my uncle by marriage, ex-Governor of Bintang, and all his family who had returned from that island to find houses were not to be got for the mere clapping of hands and calling 'boy.' Yet still letters came in at every breakfast from those others who wanted to come to our house. Uncle Percy wanted to come, being home from Burma, to do some fishing, and Uncle Brit. Therefore, when the cousins were down late to breakfast in our cold climate, the letters were handed round and my mother said:

'Percy can't come, Watkin, and certainly not Brit!'

'The old fellow wants to see about his fishing at Glanavon,' my father said.

'He can stay at the public there!' Though we were miles from Glanavon.

A camp bed had been put where there was never a camp bed before, in an attic full of chests of drawers, burst screens and a knitting-machine, for the nurse, who, I was told in the kitchen, did not like her room at all.

I knew from the closeness of my mother's eyes together (they had moved a good half-inch in the night) that she had a bilious attack, but she ran harder than ever up and down the stairs, clattering her keys and calling out to the maids to see that they were running too. As my father would often tell us, she never spared herself.

'Oh bother!' I heard her say as she turned a corner. My two cousins and I were stationed in the hall, having been got ready well before anyone else, since my mother had said we would start on our pleasure at eleven sharp and it was now half-past.

From the front hall you could hear the uproar of us all getting ready to enjoy ourselves; feet galloped on the landing, angry voices cried out, and some shot suddenly into the lavatory to take a last chance before we started. I organized my cousins and we went up and down with very long strides saying all together: 'Oh bother! Oh bother!' Nobody was pleased. The maid came through a door carrying three rugs and a lunch-basket out of which a thermos was falling. The nurse caught it while we ran round the pillars in the inner hall, shouting loudly: 'Oh bother!'

All at once the nurse ran at Anne who was the eldest. Both girls began to cry, and I wondered if she would hit me. I thought, it is the old room with the burst screens and the knitting-machine, and I turned aside to gaze into the dog's bowl where my mother had scattered tobacco on the water, against worms. Outside, the sun shone, and it was a quarter to twelve.

My mother came down the stairs so bilious that not a pin could have been put between her eyes, and sped into the front hall where my uncle the ex-governor was looking at the glass.

'Falling,' he said.

'Look at the time!' my mother cried.

'I meant the glass.'

Being a dog, I moved on all-fours from the dog's bowl and peered round the corner, as my uncle, yellow in the face and in long thin tweeds, said:

'I meant the weather. . . .'

'It's Watkin!' my mother said shrilly, ran past me, almost treading on my hand with her sharp shoe, careered up to the half-landing and shrieked his name out into the yard.

I heard the car start, roar, splutter and stop as it had done this last half-hour.

I peered at the grandfather clock in the front hall but the hands told me nothing as I could not tell the time. Looking nearly as high as the clock was the back of my uncle, the ex-governor, looking at the weather-glass.

'Blow your nose!' the nurse ordered, and pushed Anne and Clara into the front hall. 'Get up off the floor, you!' I got up, though I did not take orders from her. Anne looked at her father's back. All of us had long faces.

The maid had propped open the front door, and as we looked out at the fine sunshine, the heat haze in the valley and the cousin's car, we moved slowly towards the open door. The nurse called: 'I told you three to stay in.' And the ex-governor, turning, said: 'Anne, do what nurse tells you.'

I looked at the sunshine on the drive, and could not move towards it. As I went up to Anne to whisper, I heard the nurse say: 'She's crotchety to-day, sir.'

'Tebence,' I whispered. We turned our backs and gently bumped our bottoms together, murmuring 'Tebence!' This game was not allowed, we went at it gently while nurse was combing Clara's hair. From the yard another roar came from the car, spluttering into silence, and my uncle went through the door, I suppose to help. As the door closed Clara saw us, and being only two shouted out loud: 'Tebence!'

Nurse turned, rage sitting on her face.

'I told you two what would happen if you played that dirty game.'

Thinking of hairbrushes, we knew there was nothing for it but to run. We let out a kind of cheer and shot at last out of the front hall into the morning sun. We heard Clara hooting after us, then our car had started and was coming round. My mother had her head out of the window and was shouting at my father who couldn't hear because he was racing the engine, the ex-governor was riding on the

running-board smiling out of his yellow face at my aunt who had appeared on the steps.

Although we were hiding behind a bush in a tub, we saw nurse speaking to my aunt who shook her head, but went down to her own car. Nurse made a face at us through the bush, meaning, 'You wait,' and was going down too, when the maid signalled and between them they carried another lunch-basket, the nurse looking crosser than ever.

'What'll she do?' I asked.

'Smack me in the bath,' Anne said.

'I won't let her,' I said, giving her a sideways bump and murmuring 'Tebence.' Nurse dragged Clara so fast down the steps that her feet left the ground, and as Clara tried to hit nurse, she was pushed into her mother.

My father was in his shirt-sleeves, and my mother on the doorstep said:

'It's twelve o'clock already, Watkin.'

'There was a beetle in the jet.'

'There shouldn't have been. Why can't we start?'

I saw my father go past her into the washplace and my mother went back into the house. Keeping the far side of the car from nurse, we went round to look at the lunch-basket which was strapped behind. Then over the back of the car, Clara shouted: 'Tebence!'

'Shut up, you ape!' we hissed.

My aunt said: 'Your aunt thinks we've forgotten the cups, Anne, I wonder if we could give her a helping hand with them?'

I knew where all the cups in the house were.

'I know!' I shouted.

'Be very careful, and don't fool about.'

We took a basket and went the far side of the nurse who murmured, 'Just wait till I catch you, Miss,' although we were within reach then.

'She'll go for me in the bath to-night,' Anne said.

'I won't feel it,' I said.

We went into the pantry where all the cups in the house were behind wooden doors. I turned a tap, put my thumb under it and squirted. Anne shrieked, and we laughed so much we had to lie on the floor. I always wondered what went on when Anne and Clara were bathed by the nurse, and once I looked through the keyhole, but saw only a towel wrapped round the nurse's waist.

We had to get the cups out before the maid came or we'd never be allowed to do it. I stood on a chair, then Anne pushed me off, then we both stood on it. I opened the door and we saw hundreds of cups.

'The blue,' I said.

'No, the pink!'

'Pink's silly.'

We took some of each. We counted the aunt, the uncle, my father and mother, elderly Miss Wall who never got up for breakfast, Mr. Cobb, who'd tried also to help my father in the yard.

'And three of us.'

'And nurse,' Anne said, putting out her tongue. We put the cups in the basket and went back. In the hall my father was standing with his coat on, and from somewhere above I heard her mocking, 'Too-too!'

'What have you got there?'

'Cups,' I said.

'Confound it,' he said, and went through the door to the washplace saying: 'And don't drop them.' We carefully carried down the cups to my aunt.

'Are they nice cups?'

My mother was now shouting in the house for my father.

'Why can't we start?' my uncle asked.

'Because we don't know the way,' my aunt said.

Hats on, facing front, Mr. Cobb and Miss Wall were seated in our car, and my father ran down the steps and began to blow the horn. Shortly afterwards my mother stuck her head through the bedroom window and said she was not coming. I had been thinking of rocking the car

for fun, but my father cried out, 'Confound it!' like a boiler, and leaped off the running-board, nearly knocking me down as I tried to get up beside him, and ran into the house.

Anne and I got in with Mr. Cobb in the back, and Miss Wall sat in front. There was a silence while Mr. Cobb brought out his pipe, looked at the back of Miss Wall's head, and put it away again.

'Looking forward to a nice picnic?' he asked us. Anne and I looked at him and said nothing. Then I saw that Miss Wall had on a fur collar and a dustcoat over her fur coat, and dark glasses and a veil. I whispered to Anne: 'She's delicate.'

'What's the secret?' Mr. Cobb asked.

We looked at him and said nothing. Clara, who was two, made faces at us from the other car, but suddenly disappeared, pulled in by nurse. I heard a howl.

'I hate her,' Anne said.

I said: 'She's a damn fool.' My father damned the dog when he trod on it, and Charlie Pugh damned his sister when he came to shoot the rooks and she wouldn't pick them up. Anne gave me a pinch.

'You wouldn't dare call her,' she said.

'Yes I would,' but not so loud that Mr. Cobb could hear. We giggled, and wriggled on the seat.

'Must be a good joke.'

'Curiosity killed the cat,' I said to Mr. Cobb, before I had even thought it. Mr. Cobb's face became stiff, but Miss Wall turned and through the veil and dark glasses said:

'If you said what I thought I heard, you are a very . . .'

Anne exploded and I saw a piece of spit go over the side of the car. I had to hold my nose not to laugh. All I had to do was even think Miss Wall was a damn fool, and I would blow up.

My father ran out of the house and down the steps, and because there was only one door in the front of our car, he had to climb over Miss Wall who'd settled herself well

in with rugs, and Miss Wall tried to get out and let him in, so that they rolled on the front seat together till my father fell into his own seat apologizing.

'I am so sorry,' said Miss Wall.

'Poor old dear has a bilious attack,' my father said. He got into gear, and as we moved there was a shriek from the house.

'Damnation!' cried my father, jamming on the brakes.

'Whatever you do don't forget the fish!'

He grunted and the car moved.

'Watkin!'

'Oh, what is it?'

'Did you hear?'

The car shot away, and I saw my uncle following, with no one sitting in front beside him.

'Poor old dear felt seedy ever since she got up,' and both together they said: 'She never spares herself.'

We came to the drive gate which was shut against sheep, and my father shouted to me:

'Did it never occur to you to go on down and open the gate?'

'I thought we were going to start,' I was saying, but seeing his face, I jumped for it. Going down the hill the speedometer already showed 40 m.p.h. Mr. Cobb was failing to light his pipe in the slipstream, and my uncle had fallen some way behind.

'Tell me about the naked natives in Bintang,' I whispered to Anne.

'Not here.'

'Were they naked?'

'No.'

'You said they were.'

'Well why ask?'

'Liar!' I hissed, and pinched her; we wriggled and Mr. Cobb's face showed dislike. My mother said he had had such a painful operation for his stones.

We shot round a corner, and there from hedge to hedge

was a flock of sheep. The brakes shrieked. Anne and I were thrown in the bottom of the car, Mr. Cobb clutched the side, my father cried:

'Damnation!'

The sheep flowed slowly round the car. As I was still a dog since the morning, I got up and barked at them. My father whirled round.

'Do you want to get out and walk home?'

My mouth went dry with terror. Mr. Cobb looked and Miss Wall turned round.

'I only barked,' I heard my small voice saying. Then the man came up, and my father could say nothing since it was Jones the Bryn with fields both sides of the road.

'Good morning, sir.'

'Good morning, Mr. Jones, you damn fool,' I said under my breath, not moving and not barking, though there was another dog with Jones, that had a silver eye. Under my breath I growled.

We crossed the curved railway bridge which my father took like a roundabout and on the far side was a van which my father passed, leaning out and shouting:

'On the confounded wrong side of the road, idiotic lunacy, take your number.'

Then we were out on the tarmac where my father could really go fast, furiously hooting to pass a steam lorry in the middle of the road, at which he shook his fist as we passed. Fifty, fifty-five. The sign 'Go Slowly Through the Village,' shot by, and one or two people seemed to draw back into their doorways and touch their hats.

A train was ahead of us, so my father put on speed and we passed it at sixty, Anne and I waving. I was going to whistle when I remembered. My father was driving with one hand and pointing out to Miss Wall with the other where the fatal railway accident had been in 1921, but Miss Wall had sunk a foot lower in her seat. I looked at Mr. Cobb, his hat was jammed over his eyes, and sparks flew out of his pipe.

At the end of this long length, we rounded a corner and a man on a bicycle dived into the hedge as if he had hit a turnip. 'Wrong side!' my father shouted. We slowed to fifty-five.

Round every corner there was something, and round the next a steam-roller and fifteen men tarring the road. Brakes screamed, and we crackled over the new tar smelling the smell. Anne and I made silent faces at the dirty men, and put out our tongue but they did not seem pleased.

We went through the small town of Trallwm, forgetting the fish, I knew, but I said nothing, not wishing that day to be helpful; so we groaned without stopping in heavy low gear up out of the valley among the salty-smelling grasses and the purple heather. We stopped in the silence of the moor and the faint hiss of the breeze in the grass, while Mr. Cobb and Miss Wall got out and stretched their legs and made exclamations and my father walked up and down, as if he didn't know what to do after the drive.

My uncle's car arrived, boiling from his efforts to keep up with us. Cautiously, Anne and I began to walk along the side of the ditch away from them, but we had not gone far before the harsh voice of the nurse called Anne back, which also meant me. We were to sit still and enjoy lunch.

We were not allowed to take off our coats since clouds were blowing up, and nurse was anxious that we should sit by her in a hollow near the road, and several yards from the food, which my aunt was now unpacking. My father had walked up the road with the two men to show them the moor, and Clara was trying to stand on her head.

In a low voice Miss Wall said to my aunt: 'That was a dreadful drive.'

'Just bad tempers all round,' my aunt said, then seeing my eye on her smiled.

'Why didn't . . .' Miss Wall began, but my aunt shook her head at us saying loudly that food generally tasted better in the open air.

I began to push Anne off the rug towards some thistles,

while nurse with a very long face carried the other lunch-basket out of our car. My aunt said: 'Anne, come and sit by me, dear.' But nurse forbade it, saying she was in disgrace, and Clara was put there instead, being told to stay right way up. Miss Wall was whispering to my aunt and I could not hear.

'Lunch!' my aunt called in a shrill voice, and the men came slowly back, Mr. Cobb from a clump of trees where he had been by himself. My aunt did some of the things my mother did on a picnic, laughed loudly and waved the thermos. The cups were missing, and like good children we were sent for them to the car.

'Good heavens, they're the old dear's best blue ones, and the pink!' my father cried, picking up one in his heavy finger and thumb and dropping it. The handle broke off and a large piece out of the side.

'How could you be such a young fool!' he shouted at me. My aunt murmured and hissed, and the nurse glared at me with steely delight.

The pieces were put into a paper bag and lunch began. I was hungry and Anne and I began to bounce up and down on our rug, two yards from the food. I saw the tin go to my aunt who laughed and handed it to Miss Wall, who handed it back. Then Mr. Cobb pressed a leg of chicken on to my uncle, and finally my father had a pick and gave the tin to the nurse. This took some time, and the spittle swam in my mouth as I thought of the chicken in it.

Nurse gave us the tin and before we had anything in our hands I heard: 'Don't be greedy, Anne!'; cries of 'Anne!' from her parents and a shout from my father at myself. There was little left. We had wanted a wishbone, so that we could wish, but we had a drumstick and another small scrap at the bottom of the tin. I wanted the drumstick, but the nurse pulled even this to bits with her hateful fingers and put the scraps on thick slices of bread so that, according to her, it was a fair deal. The grown-ups

laughed and handed food, but the nurse sat a little way apart, being unable to laugh with them, and kept her sour eye on us.

Clara was kept away from us, and sandwiched between her mother and Miss Wall, did what she could to shout against them all, but in spite of this had better bits than we. There was a cup of milky tea between us, and a medicine-bottle of milk for Clara, which she knocked out of her mother's hand on to the rug.

'Let me!' said the nurse, trying to take over from my aunt, but Clara shouted:

'You're a damn fool, nanny!'

In the silence, only Mr. Cobb tittered.

'Where . . . where . . . ?' my aunt asked.

'Him!' Clara shrieked, pointing at me.

My father was staring, my uncle had a face of stone, Anne pinched me quietly, and fear came suddenly on me that it was not Anne who would be smacked to-night, and not nurse who would do it.

'I never . . . ' I began, but seeing they did not believe, I stopped. Clara was boiling over with laughter, pointing at everyone and calling them damn fools, but the nurse reached over past her mother and caught one of her waving hands a hard slap which put a stop to anything but yelling. A hot blush came up from my waist to my head, so that my whole scalp prickled.

Gradually they began speaking among themselves again. Time passed slowly, and there was nothing more to eat. To go away from what I had done, I looked out at Cwm-y-rhiwdre, at the swelling line of the hill coming up from the pine wood where the road dived down, the hill that travelled against the sky to . . . where? Bintang where the naked natives walked? How naked, and what showed? No one would tell me, and I saw a naked black with a blur about his middle.

While I looked, they broke in, and with a start I was running about as told, but Clara was held fast by the nurse

because of what she had heard. The clouds came sailing up and went away into the distance, and a salty wind blew among the moorland grasses. I shivered.

'As far as those trees and no farther,' we heard after us, but we walked in the opposite direction, because we had come up that way, along the road that ran over the mountains into the grey clouds.

I pulled Anne by the arm, and we had gone some way before I turned and saw nurse waving us back. We waved with our hands and handkerchiefs to say good-bye, and stamped in puddles and splashed.

'Tell me,' I said. 'I mean really tell.'

'I told you.'

'Did they wear loin-clothes?'

'Yes.'

'All the time?'

'All the time.'

'But you said . . . ' Anne laughed and ran on. I thought, we have bushes with a secret tunnel leading to a secret cavern under the laurels under the oak-trees by the kitchen-garden. But I wanted to see a naked native, and see everything as big and strong as a tree.

The grown-ups had moved off the road up the hill, as small as twigs or little cows grazing far away. The nurse was on the road with Clara. All their eyes were on us, there was nowhere on the huge hillside to hide.

Ann said: 'Look at the clouds, they're giants.'

'They're no such thing,' I said.

A mist swept up around us, warm and wet and drizzling, but we turned back, because if we were wet they would be angry. The mist ran ahead, blotted out the hill, the little figures of our relations, and we were alone on the mountain. I began to push Anne off the road, over the grass, towards the ditch full of water and weeds at the side, but I wouldn't dare push her in. She shrieked. I jumped in a puddle to splash her, but most of it shot up my trouser-leg.

'Why are you so beastly to me?' I thought she was going to cry, and if she came back crying, there would be more trouble. What had I done to her? What had I been thinking?

'What've I done? The water's gone up my trousers.' When I said 'trousers' we burst out laughing, and because we were alone in the mist, we ran into the road bending and banging our bottoms and shouting 'tebence' louder than we'd done since the first day we discovered it and it was forbidden.

The mist lifted and we were nearer than we knew. There were the cars and the grown-ups large as gateposts hurrying down the hill towards them. Suddenly the sun came out, and everyone stood still where they were and looked up at the sky.

'I want to go somewhere,' Anne said. The nurse, whom we had not seen, rose up from a hollow where the lunch had been, and seized her. I moved away across the road and looked at the mountain. There was my father on a rise, standing like the statue of an explorer, one foot ahead, and my uncle the ex-governor below him like a follower and Mr. Cobb.

I looked behind me at Anne and the nurse who were close together holding up Anne's skirts so that I saw the big white curve of flesh like a huge white face against the moor, while Clara stood close behind and watched. I must look, and the nurse looked at me and I must look away. Then back I looked to that white curve, but it was over and clothes were being pulled up, and I looked up at my father standing like an African explorer on a mountain, to see if he had seen me looking.

The sun lasted only for a fraction, and Miss Wall, careful of her health, was wrapped in rugs in the car as the next rain began to fall. All ran to the cars, and my father and others struggled with the hood that rose and fell and caught my father's fingers.

'Damnation!' I heard, and the hood rose like a black

flapping rook, and was fixed. As I climbed in after Anne I lowered my head lest my father see me and remember.

'Have you got the broken cup?' he asked my aunt. The pieces were packed. Would my mother be as cross as when I broke the window in the disused hen-house, deliberately, by firing a stone? We were in, and the rain spattered on the hood and dripped down beside us in the back.

My father asked if Miss Wall would like the side-curtains.

'Oh, no, thank you.'

'It's no trouble, they're in the back under the seat.'

'Oh, certainly not.'

Mr. Cobb leaned back and began to light his pipe.

'A sad end to a nice picnic,' he said to us. We looked at his pipe and said nothing, but Miss Wall turned:

'What did you say?'

The car started, we hissed along the wet road down the steep hill into the valley full of rain and mist. My father, being as my mother said such a careful driver, said:

'Have to go carefully on these skiddy roads.'

'Yes,' said Miss Wall.

The smell of the exhaust came up through the floor-boards. I began to feel sad, because I might be sick and nobody would care. What would be said about the cup? Would they forget me, and saying damn? As I looked into the mist and thought sad thoughts, I saw a van ahead, then it was a caravan with gypsies with dark faces and red handkerchiefs sitting up in the doorway; then several horses and another caravan, and a lot of gypsies walking along under old sacks. As we passed the last gypsies they cheered the car with my father looking so stiff and dignified in front, with Miss Wall under her rugs and dark glasses, and Mr. Cobb puffing at his pipe.

'Hooray!' Anne and I shrieked, and 'Hooray!' again. My father gave a violent swerve and nearly went into the ditch.

'How dare you?' Then, seeing that Anne had cheered too, he said to me: 'If I were in your shoes I'd keep as quiet

as possible.' I shivered and became very sad, and smelt the exhaust fumes. Perhaps if I could make myself sick over the side they would be sorry for me and forgive. But my only hope was in another car. A great shining car of golden brass and red paint, waiting at the door when we got home.

A tall, lovely woman in furs and lilac-scented veils would be there and a bronzed man, a General from the East, long and smiling, beside her, and they would be my true parents who had been in the East all these years, now come to take me to my real home, among kind loving faces and long-lost brothers and sisters.

What did these other two care for me here with their cars and their visitors and servants? When they hated me, trod on me, and were angry about the cup. But I hadn't broken the cup. Had Anne told them about our cavern in the bushes? Did they hate me because they had found out?

We hissed past the station and again I knew that we had forgotten the fish but did not say so. Past the tree where the white owls nested and the young ones snored, straight through the village where the people had all gone into their homes.

At the drive gate I hopped out quickly so that my sins might be forgotten if I appeared willing. Miss Wall gave me a smile.

'Walk up!' my father shouted, roaring in bottom gear through the gate and leaving me standing. My uncle's car came and I was kindly allowed to stand on the running-board in the rain, splashed by the bushes on the side of the drive, although there was a seat inside by him. I went round to the yard and planned to remain in the stables or climb into the loft and hide; perhaps hide all night and in the morning run away to sea.

Old Carlo the brown spaniel passed me. 'Good Carlo,' I said, he being my friend, one with me, who lived in a kennel and was called and fed, and sometimes beaten. Carlo wagged his tail. As I walked past the loose-boxes,

an upper window went up and my father yelled my name.

'Your mother wants you. She's lying down.'

Slowly I walked towards the house; slowly dragging my feet I went up the back stairs, meeting no cheerful maids, hearing no screeches from the kitchen. Anne and Clara and the nurse had disappeared.

Slowly I went along the passage, up the steps, out on to the landing. My mother called my name, my heart beat; in a few seconds now, only a few seconds, I would not be the same any more. I would be punished, crying.

My mother called again. They had found out much more besides. Anne had told all. I pushed open the door.

My mother was lying without her glasses on, under the counterpane. Half the blinds were drawn. By her was a tumbler with some nasty salts.

'This awful word,' she said in a low voice. 'When Mumsie feels so bilious. And now you see what an evil, wicked thing it is, I mean . . . you are, when little Clara . . . little Clara calls her nanny a . . . damned fool. Don't you know that no little gentleman ever, ever uses such a word before a lady? Can't you think how it hurts Mumsie to see her little boy growing up into a little cad? A regular cad. Using language a guttersnipe might use, but never a little gentleman.'

She took another sip of the nasty salts. I waited, my throat throbbing, the tears near.

'I want you to promise me faithfully never to use that word again. Never. Say: "I promise."'

'I promise,' I gulped.

'We try to love you, we do love you, and why, why do you insist on doing these horrid things? Now go and get straight into bed. No, it's no use being sorry. Go on, and be quick.'

I turned and went slowly from the room.

'Shut the door,' I heard. I shut my mother into her room by herself. I turned to my bed in my father's

dressing-room, now shut off from the day, from Anne, from the servants, dogs, stable and the woods beyond. Slowly I opened the door, surveyed my bed covered with the counterpane of the day, not even turned down, jammed in among my father's monstrous chests of drawers and tallboys in that narrow room.

I would not sob yet, standing in that cold, narrow room. Slowly I undressed and put on my cold pyjamas and climbed on to the bed. I squatted, looking at my father's football groups from Cambridge, where the players had tasselled caps and white trousers tucked into their stockings, and long moustaches. My mother moved in the next room, calling my name to ask was I in bed.

I pushed my feet down into the cold sheets. My mother's clock chimed four. My throat trembled, sobs came, I turned on the pillow and bit it. I saw those tall people in their car, come out of the East to rescue me, and love me and take me away for ever. With all my might I wished, but when the wish went, here was I in a cold bed, and four hours to go before my bedtime.

My father's feet climbed the stairs, and into my mother's room. Through the closed-up door behind my father's washstand I heard their voices. It was me then. My mother, too bilious to beat me, would send in my father to do it. I lay very still, hardly breathing. I must run away; but my clothes were off and my legs would not move. I must plead; but I knew they took no heed of excuses. I must be sorry; but I was sorry.

'One of my good pink cups!' I heard. 'My good set that Mother gave us for a wedding present,' her voice rose. 'Oh, I do think it was unpardonable of you!'

My father's voice murmured.

'To deliberately take one of my best pink cups up to Cwm-y-rhiwdre for a picnic. And then break it. No, it's no good talking, Watkin. It's unpardonable, unpardonable. How can it be riveted? And is that the same thing? One of my good pink cups.'

I could imagine her standing, opposite my father's red, angry face, he not able to answer her. Then I remembered that Anne and I had fetched the cups and Anne had chosen the pink when I wanted to bring the blue. Therefore it was Anne's fault, and she should be punished. But why was my father taking the blame?

'And the fish, Watkin. Couldn't you remember just that one little thing I asked you?'

'My dearie!' my father cried, then giving a kind of strangled cough, ran out of the room banging the door. Soon my mother went downstairs also, to her guests, not sparing herself no matter how bilious she felt, as I had been often told. I lay and heard nothing. They were having tea.

I reached to the hanging-cupboard over my head, feeling among the bottles of pills and patent medicines with which my father crammed every shelf in the room. I would read a book and hide it when I heard them coming. I saw: *Manual of Railway Engineering, English-Spanish Conversation Dictionary, Handy Tables for Brewers*, then—*Beautiful Thoughts*.

At the title I felt a sudden happiness at the lovely words, like the pictures of our Loving Saviour which hung over my mother's bed, watching over her, as she said, like a tender shepherd over his little lamb. I liked best the beautiful thoughts in Greek where I could pore over the strange alphabet wondering should I ever penetrate the mystery and read these words clearly.

But the clock chimed, and I wandered from the book to the hours that had to pass, and myself lying forgotten in bed while life went on, and people laughed and talked. Then I suddenly thought of the girls having their bath together, and remembered that the nurse would smack Anne. And I remembered the white bottom I had seen on the moor and thought of it being smacked. But they would forget to do it, I should be forgotten in bed and could not be near the door and listen for sounds, nor go

near the keyhole as I had planned. Then I wished that we all slept in one room together and could laugh and talk and keep away the heavy hours that weighed on me in the narrow room.

I heard them cross the hall, laughing and talking, all in good tempers after the nice run up to our grouse-moor and the jolly picnic. And perhaps my mother now felt less bilious and would come smiling into my room and tell me to get up. I heard the little clock strike five next door, the voices ceased, a door shut, and I lay listening to the singing of my ears in the silence after a day's pleasure.



C. DAY LEWIS

SEEN FROM THE TRAIN

Somewhere between Crewkerne
And Yeovil it was. On the left of the line
Just as the crinkled hills unroll
To the plain. A church on a small green knoll—
A limestone church,
And above the church
Cedar boughs stretched like hands that yearn
To protect or to bless. The whole

Stood up, antique and clear
As a cameo, from the vale. I swear
It was not a dream. Twice, thrice had I found it
Chancing to look as my train wheeled round it.
But this time I passed,
Though I gazed as I passed
All the way down the valley, that knoll was not there,
Nor the church nor the trees it mounded.

What came between to unsight me? . . .
But suppose, only suppose there might be
A secret look in a landscape's eye
Following you as you hasten by,
And you have your chance—
Two or three chances
At most—to hold and interpret it rightly,
Or it is gone for aye.

There was a time when men
Would have called it a vision, said that sin
Had blinded me since to a heavenly fact.
Well, I have neither invoked nor faked

Any church in the air,
And little I care
Whether or no I shall see it again.
But blindly my heart is racked

When I think how, not twice or thrice,
But year after year in another's eyes
I have caught the look that I missed to-day
Of the church, the knoll, the cedars—a ray
Of the faith, too, they stood for,
The hope they were food for,
The love they prayed for, facts beyond price—
And turned my eyes away,
And turned my eyes away.



ALAN PRYCE-JONES

INHERITANCE

It was Miriam's turn to do the tea. She came in with the silver, sighing a little. There was a cloth in the drawer under the bookcase, and a stamp-box full of saccharin on the writing-table. Then she came back with another tray of cakes and butter-dishes. Each butter-dish had a different ribbon on it. Blue for Aunt Maudie, pink for Harriet, yellow for Mother, green for Paul, black for Dermot (one got the ribbon one could), red for Miriam, and a silver plaque for Father. It was inscribed 'Claret,' but no matter. A little bit had been taken from each dish and mixed together for Mrs. Compton, who was a duty guest. Dermot's portion was cut in half for Colonel Mainwaring. Dermot had invited him.

Nothing ever came easily to the Abercrombie-Botelers. They were a family who mended sheets by the hour; whose fires went out; who needed things suddenly from the chemist; who lived by rote imperfectly learned. Miriam could not put a log on the hearth without a sniff for toast burning elsewhere. She could not command her own attention sufficiently to run into the kitchen for fear one gleam of private life might be exposed to the visitors in her absence; a gleam, that is, other than the negligent pencil carefully laid along the spine of an open book. There was something hidden under every chair.

The afternoon had fallen breathless with the approach of evening. She plumped up the cushions, and shifted a great bowl of vermilion camellias on the piano. She thrust Mother's sewing, at the sound of voices, quickly under the sofa. She counted the cups for the second time. A faint air of tragedy hanging about her might be attributable to the hardships, so clearly unfamiliar, of a life without servants in The Admiral's House.

'Oh, dear,' she heard Aunt Maudie say, 'I don't think Harriet will be able to come down. She's got another of her heads.'

'But she only had one on Friday,' Miriam exclaimed.

'I suppose she's been upset,' Aunt Maudie said. 'First there was the bad news, and then Father on top of it, and now Mrs. Compton. It will have been altogether too much.'

'It means a tray,' Miriam considered aloud, and dismissed the matter. From a locked canister she measured eleven spoonfuls of tea into a silver caddy.

'If we are to be so many this will have to be good enough,' she said. 'With Harriet upset I don't like to ask her for her tea ration. She keeps it in her room, too.'

'But you know Mother can't touch Indian,' Aunt Maudie said.

'Then it will mean another tray, with her own little tea-pot. Aunt Maudie, we can't give the good tea all round. Colonel Mainwaring may expect whiskey as well.'

She opened the window to air the room. The soft Cornish air had a green and secret smell, and the light from the sea touched warmly on the pink walls of the house. 'It is really the spring at last,' Miriam said. 'And to think I haven't taken a step out of doors to-day. If anybody ought to have a head in this house it's me.'

'You look all peaked,' Aunt Maudie agreed. 'You ought to go to the North coast for a week. You could take Dermot; he hasn't been sleeping. And get right away from it all.'

'Not just the very week Sister's coming. Isn't it extraordinary that there's always something?'

But Aunt Maudie, thinking she noticed a slight smell of burning from the kitchen, was off, and, as the house seemed utterly silent—it was barely half-past four—Miriam, with a conscious experience of leisure, walked out to the terrace over the bay. Here, however angry her troubles, there was always peace. Like tarnished silver, the black leaves of the camellia-trees pressed out from the side of the house, offering angelic flowers. There stood a little domed pink

temple at the end of the garden, and behind it, across a motionless lagoon, a line of green rocks which opened, between shelving cliffs, glimpses of the sea. Above this wet, rich hollow full of waxen flowers—for there was a magnolia too beside the temple—and contending greens, the house seemed, from the terrace, quite imposing. From any distance it was a pink classical villa at the end of a short avenue; but, fore-shortened from the angle of the terrace, the little pediment on the south side had an air. There had surely been men-servants kept before the war, and a big car, even horses, in the range of pink stables under a lantern with plaster peeling from the slats. In niches beside the garden door statues of Music and Architecture represented the tastes of old Admiral Abercrombie-Boteler in retirement. At least, so it was said. But one relaxed here, one had no tastes any more. The inhabitants slept in this steaming, graceful hollow beside the sea, or nowadays bicycled, at best, reluctantly into the town to get a prescription made up at the chemist's.

Still sighing, Miriam came back into the house and closed the window. One might not hear the bell, she thought, and then hesitated at an unfamiliar footstep in the hall outside. A voice said: 'Is there anybody there?' She heard a small cough and the thin tap of an umbrella on the marble flags.

'Good gracious! Mrs. Compton.' She flew to the door. 'Oh, you poor thing. I was out on the terrace and I didn't hear the bell.'

'What, have you got nobody again? I guessed that must be it, so I just let myself in'—they embraced in the middle of a sentence—'and here I am. And what a pretty room!'

'Of course, you've never seen it. In all these years.'

Mrs. Compton was looking anxiously round, like a game-dog. 'And these ships and telescopes? Do tell me.'

'They were the Admiral's. Hardly anything has been altered since his day. Why, we haven't even got electric light.'

Mrs. Compton squealed hoarsely. 'Well!'

There didn't seem very much to say. 'I wonder where Mother and Father are,' Miriam said, knowing that they were lying down upstairs. And again, after a pause: 'Do you like the hotel?'

'It's very clean and warm. I feel better already in your wonderful air. You know, until it stopped, we didn't feel how tired we got during the war.'

'One gets so run down,' Miriam said, without concentrating. She was listening for steps overhead.

Mrs. Compton was saying something about Thurloe Place. It had been really providential; it was only afterwards she had felt the shock, oh, in quite small things like jumping when the telephone rang; and then the doctor had said she had to give everything up. Especially at her age. She had spent nearly a year staying with friends, but staying with friends is not like being on one's own, and so here she was.

'And your father?' she asked abruptly, as though to regain attention.

'He's really marvellous for seventy-three,' Miriam replied hastily. Ought one to warn her or not? 'When did you last see him?' she asked.

'I haven't seen him for twenty years. You know he never comes to London.'

'You will find him . . . changed.'

'And your mother?'

'Just the same. Though she misses things dreadfully, at heart.'

'Her letters are always so splendid. I know just everything about her. When the maids leave, or anything, she writes it all. That bad news the other day about a cook . . .'

'But I can't think,' Miriam interrupted, following her own train of thought, 'where she is.' And she ran to the door, calling in a different, flute-like tone, 'Oo-oo oo-oo' up the stairs. 'It's Mrs. Compton,' she called, her voice flattening to a shout, and at once there was a sense of animation in the upstairs passage.

Mrs. Abercrombie-Boteler had a feeling for the dramatic. It was expressed in long muslin scarves and feverish movement of the hands. 'Darling,' she was saying half-inaudibly as she crossed the hall, 'I am so ashamed, darling,' and she came into the room with her fingers extended so that the fire and the last of the sun flashed together on her rings. 'You come all this way to see us, and there is no one to welcome you.'

'There was Miriam,' Mrs. Compton said, but without elaborating the point. It was a great row of cups on the table, she was thinking, and she wondered who else was expected.

'And that tiresome Harriet has gone and got one of her heads. Just when she was so dying to see you.'

'Couldn't I peep in after tea?' Mrs. Compton suggested.

'We'll see, we'll see. She's quite knocked up somehow. I think it must be the war. We are tireded than we know.'

'There!' said Mrs. Compton. 'That's exactly what I was saying to Miriam.'

'Miriam has a fearful time,' Mrs. Abercrombie-Boteler pursued, as though Miriam was out of the room. 'Now we have no one, it throws such a weight on her. It's Miriam who does the lot in the end, isn't it, darling?' She loosed the bright blue muslin back from her shoulders and extended her arms to her daughter.

'In that case I had better remind Aunt Maudie about the scones and see where Father is,' Miriam said, inflexibly, and went out of the room.

Mrs. Abercrombie-Boteler stared after her, accepting the necessity. She was a sharp little old lady, whose life passed in a series of tangents. Thus she touched her chief interest, comfort, at a certain point, but touched it only; as wife, as mother, and in friendship, she had acquired a skimming habit of approach and contact and evasion; so that now, when the two drew together, she was bound to make straight for a true communion, rub against it at a single point, and fly off again alone.

'One thing,' she said, 'is that it can't last much longer. Leo is over seventy, you know, though one tends to forget it.'

'But, Alex, what would you do then?' Mrs. Compton asked, with exquisite lack of emphasis.

'Oh, sell, certainly. Don't you see each of the children in their own little house? I'm old, I'm no longer interesting. But I'd thought I might keep one of the girls and get a wee flat in London.'

'You might take Thurloe Place. After the shock I'm sure I can never go back there.'

'It all depends on Leo,' Mrs. Boteler said. 'I must say, I've been worried about him lately. We're getting a trained nurse for him this week. He seems so abstracted sometimes. I think it must be a series of little tiny strokes.'

'He must be a great anxiety, a very great anxiety,' Mrs. Compton said. 'And all these lovely things. How you will hate to see them go.'

'Luckily there is no entail,' Mrs. Boteler said. 'And Dermot is so good. Oh, we've had long, long talks, Dermot and I. He is sure to know just what Leo would have wished.'

'It is such years since I even saw Leo. And he was so strong and cheerful, I can't believe . . .'

'Well, you'll see. He has lost all his spirits lately. We think it would be best for him if he were taken, though it's a hard thing to say, Lucy dear. And with some of his rum ideas . . . I ought to have warned you . . . S-sh.' She stiffened on the sofa at the sound of a step, and relaxed again as Paul came in.

'I never thought you'd get here,' he exclaimed, taking Mrs. Compton by the shoulder, as if the threepenny bus ride from the hotel were an adventure. 'Well, well, well!' He spoke from habit with large cordiality. It was customary in the house to remark that from his cheerful manner in front of strangers one would never guess at his moods. Paul's moods were among the accepted burdens

of the family, anxiously awaited and discussed in low tones at bedroom conferences. It was agreed that, because of his moods, Paul could do no work; thus the responsibility of Dermot for Paul was unquestioningly desired and accorded. He was a great reader. The Abercrombie-Botelers did not as a rule care for reading, and his mother often wondered whether the moods might not be attributable to strain. Paul himself was inclined to believe this. He had the habit of sitting in his square room above the front door with an old ottoman full of books beside him. He did not read consistently, but dipped and dipped again until the type or the binding tired him. He noticed occasionally that a book revived when it was taken into a different atmosphere; a page which was hardly bearable indoors became quite pleasant when it was brought out to the temple. But the effort of leaving the house became greater each year, and since he was conscious of the necessity to husband his strength, he had come to spend a good part of the day simply lying down. The moods became blacker and more frequent, but he was able to store up enough energy to touch in an impression of gaiety when there were guests in the house, and even occasionally to go with Dermot to the cinema when the film was known to be shortish and wholesome.

‘Well,’ he said with some eagerness, ‘where is everybody? Is there anything to eat for tea?’

‘I expect Maudie is waiting for Dermot and Colonel Mainwaring,’ his mother said. And as though to underline her words the front door slammed, the hall began to fill with voices, there was a sound of buttons as coats were thrown on mahogany, and the baize door leading to the back passage opened and shut. At last they all came in, Colonel Mainwaring exclaiming, Dermot kissing Mrs. Compton, Aunt Maudie bringing a plate of hot scones and Miriam carrying a little tray for Mrs. Boteler. While she greeted them all she counted the cups for the third time.

And this, she thought, while they all went over to the

big tea-table and she stayed behind a moment to pile logs on the fire, this is our way of marking the calender. We get no older, we don't lose our friends or our interests, we always wear the same clothes. We shouldn't know where we were except for the Sundays. We shall always remember to-day because it is the day of Mrs. Compton's first visit. If it were not getting dark Dermot might have taken a photograph. And soon Father will die and Dermot will explain about the death duties and we shall start writing to remind each other how happy we used to be. Mother and I near Harrod's, and Harriet travelling for her health, and Dermot and Paul in a convenient house at Ascot.

They made a charming and lively group. The sun had sunk below the cliffs, but against the peaceful yellow of the sky the black camellia leaves flashed like knives before the window. It was very nearly dark enough to draw the curtains and to release the hidden glow of the fire; but Miriam paused to notice her own pleasure in the black and yellow world outside, the colourless tweed shoulders and the echoing silver of the table and the flashing leaves. 'Aren't you having any tea, darling?' her mother asked, and added by way of explanation: 'She worries so about Harriet.' As Miriam took her place she added: 'If you'd rather, you could take her up just a cup.'

'She's really better left in peace,' Miriam said.

'Do you know, I wonder if I heard her bell,' Mrs. Boteler said, in a wheedling tone. 'Now the very thing would be a little lime or camomile.'

'Harriet knows it is no good ringing when there is nobody there.'

'Let *me* go,' exclaimed Aunt Maudie, jumping up.

'Listen,' Dermot said, with the grave authority of an elder son. 'Harriet must rest now. Miriam can take her some hot camomile with her medicine at six. But there is something much more serious. We have all forgotten Father.'

'Gracious!' Mrs. Boteler said. 'Darling, somebody, do

run up.' There was a general stir, in which Dermot and Miriam reached the door. A few moments later Dermot came back with too composed an air, and asked Colone Mainwaring to come and give him a hand.

'What is it?' Mrs. Boteler said, sensing at once.

'Nothing, dearest; nothing to worry about. Only let Noll come and help me a second and we'll be back in no time.' In their absence silence fell.

'I wonder,' Paul said, 'if I ought to do something.'

'Probably Leo had forgotten his sticks,' Aunt Maudie said.

'Now, we won't get fussed,' Mrs. Boteler said. 'Luckily there is plenty of hot water, so anybody can have another cup of tea, and in a few minutes Dermot will come and explain what he means by his queer behaviour.'

It was nearly a quarter of an hour, however, before he returned, and his opening words were again; 'There's nothing to worry about, Mother. Only a little accident of some kind. I don't think I should go up if I were you but I promise you you needn't worry.'

'Is he dead?' Mrs. Boteler asked, half-rising.

'I think he must have had a fall. He was unconscious on the stairs. Noll and I have laid him on his bed. He is quite happy. In fact, he is still unconscious. Miriam is with him.'

'I have some salts,' Aunt Maudie said, jumping up, 'and there is brandy in the sideboard. Dear, I hope Harriet hasn't guessed what is happening. In her state.'

Colonel Mainwaring said: 'There are some things which it is easier to hear from an outsider. Dear Mrs. Boteler, if it should come to a tragedy—and I don't for a second believe it need—the end will have been a most beautiful one.'

'I am quite sure,' Mrs. Compton said at once, 'it will turn out to be nothing worse than another of those little tiny strokes of his.'

But Mrs. Boteler was on her feet and winding her wrists in the ends of her scarf. 'If it had to be,' she said, 'it is merciful. In a moment I shall go up, but just now it

would be too much. You will forgive me, Lucy.' Mrs. Compton gave her a long kiss, and she left the room, followed by Dermot.

'It is hard to know what to do,' Paul said with the added status of one who, by the defection of others, suddenly finds himself a host. 'I suppose we are waiting for the doctor.' Then, after a pause, as if thinking aloud: 'I don't know how we shall ever get out of this house. If you could see the crush in the attics.'

'In a way it is a wonderful moment to get rid of it,' Mrs. Compton said. 'I mean, without being callous, one must look facts in the face. The Corporation can build all over those paddocks at the end of the drive without spoiling the garden.'

'Dermot has always wanted to live nearer London,' Paul said. 'But it's impossible to find houses near London, I believe. I must say, I had hoped we could stay on here for a year or two.'

'For your mother's sake,' Colonel Mainwaring reminded him quickly, 'you ought not to impose the responsibility of this big place on her.'

'I've offered her my little house in Thurloe Place,' Mrs. Compton broke in. 'It is really rather a chance. And now it looks as if a change might suit us both marvellously.'

Footsteps echoed all over the house. It was with surprise therefore, when Aunt Maudie went up with salts and brandy and a small jug of hot water, that she found old Mr. Abercrombie-Boteler momentarily alone in his room. He lay on his bed fully dressed, with his eyes closed. There was a knitted blanket over him, and his silky white hair had been carefully combed by somebody since the accident. Apart from his anxious breathing he might have lain quietly asleep. The table by the bed had already been touched with solicitude. The patriotic journals and the indictments of freemasonry which were now Mr. Boteler's only reading had been displaced by a variety of large spoons, a few capsules on a plate, water, and a measuring-glass.

There seemed little to be done. She tiptoed to the bed and touched his pulse, she turned the light away, and settled herself on a hard chair in the semi-darkness. When Miriam came in she whispered: 'Go down and get rid of them,' motioning her away. They argued in low tones, and it was Miriam who went off in the end, shrugging her shoulders. It was her own place, she felt, to sit by him. But it was also her place to take out the tea-things, to wash up, to put on the potatoes for dinner, to prepare aspirin and camomile for Harriet. In the back passage, walking past the clef-shaped springs upon which the bells were hung, she found no place in her heart for sorrow, but a raw grudge against a world in which it was no longer possible for the Abercrombie-Botelers to lie at peace, ringing from the library and the morning-room and the dining-room, ringing from their bedrooms, from the telephone-room and the front-door lobby, ringing in the certain expectation of a butler hurrying to one set of bells and a choice of maids to another.

The conversation, as she cleared the tea-things, irritated her further. Paul was saying:

'I shall take no part in the practical side. And I am sure that Dermot will advise Mother to choose a furnished service flat so that we can split up the whole of the furniture right away without fresh complications in a few years' time.'

'Surely she will have sentimental reasons . . . ' Mrs. Compton ventured.

'Oh, naturally, anything she really wants she must have. I was thinking of the good things, like the chairs in the morning-room. Don't you agree that they should be handed over straight away?'

'Chairs, how lovely!' Mrs. Compton said. 'Alas, this is not the time to see them.'

'As soon as the doctor has set your minds at rest,' Colonel Mainwaring said, 'we must be off. I feel it would be cruel to leave you without knowing. Leo has been almost a

father to me. I don't know what we shall do when this dear old place breaks up and you all go your ways.'

What a Sunday, Miriam thought, as the sink filled and she piled the cups beside it. Had it happened on a week-day appearances would have been preserved. The sound of the doctor's car arriving presaged a long procession of small cars, and finally vans, and then silence. Do I feel strange to myself, she wondered, because Father is dying, or because I don't want to leave The Admiral's House after all, or simply because it is my day to do the tea? There were voices in the hall and on the stairs, but she kept to her task without allowing herself to listen. No, she said in her heart, there is only one reason to be sad: Father is dying. And even that is not a good reason to be sad. I am sad because he is dying on the day when I do the tea. I am sad because I am his daughter. I am sad because he won't read little threepenny weeklies in the temple, and watch the camellias being laid in my long basket, and ask me the time, and hunch his shoulders into his green corduroy coat. I am sad for myself all the time, and chiefly because I am expected to be sad for myself. She put in her hand and pulled the leaves from the tea-pot in angry disgust, she threw them in the pig-tub to spite the pigs. There was a long silence. She finished the washing-up, and while she was putting away the dried silver her mother came in. Miriam saw at once that something was wrong.

'Darling, he says there is very little danger,' Mrs. Boteler began, and Miriam could only stand looking at her in silence.

'It is so merciless,' her mother cried, sitting down, as if exhausted, on the pantry chair. 'Think, at seventy-three. Of course, one can't ask to have him put away. I don't know what Dr. Morrison would think. But there he was, and it all seemed settled, and now they say he will get better.'

'It's so bad for *you*,' Miriam said tenderly, and kissed her again and again.

'When it is so exactly what Father always wanted,' her

mother pursued. 'I really don't see why one should be made to live when one is so old. And getting no pleasure from it either. Heaven knows what we're to tell Harriet. She's been asleep all the time and you know how she worships Leo.' She reverted to her theme. 'The doctor says he'll be up before so very long, and there's no reason why he shouldn't live for years.'

'Come, Mother,' Harriet said, with decision, 'you're worn out and I don't wonder. The others must be wanting to go. We'll push them off and put you straight to bed with a hot bottle. Aunt Maudie and I can easily do whatever is necessary for Father.'

The house stirred again with a normal bustle; the respectful silences which had hung about the ground-floor rooms broke with apology and explanation.

'I said it was nothing,' Mrs. Compton repeated in the hall, 'but it is always much wiser to know. He's probably just worn out by the war like the rest of us. Now, Alex, you promise you will let me know if I can help in any way. I need be no trouble. I can do my own room. And while you are all managing this big house I can watch and ward.'

Mrs. Boteler embraced her. 'You would never fail us, Lucy; but just at present, I don't think . . .' And Aunt Maudie interrupted to say: 'Why, we couldn't hear of such a thing.'

'I don't want to hurry you,' Dermot said, as she still hesitated. His voice sounded as if he was at the end of his patience. 'But your bus will be there in just about three minutes.'

'Fly, fly,' Mrs. Boteler cried. 'One can always telephone. And I do so apologize for everything.' Miriam, suddenly overcome, had already gone to the back of the hall. There was a smell of tobacco in the library and of wood-smoke from a log which had slipped forward. The others were grouped round the front door, waving Mrs. Compton and Colonel Mainwaring up the avenue. Safe at last, she sat on the sofa and burst into tears.

'I know, I know,' her mother murmured, returning, her eyes bright with sympathy, and the two of them knelt in front of the fire, stacking the logs on the burning ash, until Miriam exclaimed with a gulp, jumping up: 'There! I haven't put away the butter-dishes, and I'm sure Aunt Maudie will have taken all Mrs. Compton's piece for herself. Oh, and isn't that Harriet's bell?'

'They are all so quite quite wonderful,' Mrs. Compton was saying in the bus. 'Nobody knows what Alex has put up with, stuck away there all the year round. And those beloved girls of hers.'

'Of course they have that dear old place,' Colonel Mainwaring reminded her. 'It'll be an absolute gold mine one day.'

'They want something much more sensible. Leo has been really selfish about it.'

'Oh, I can't agree, Mrs. Compton. Not with prices where they are.'

'If I was them I should get a house without a spare room. It will be the only way of getting rid of that tiresome old aunt.' They laughed.

'But nobody in the family would ever notice she is tiresome. They are absolute saints,' Colonel Mainwaring added gravely.

'Do you suppose they made their own cakes, too? The ginger was delicious,' Mrs. Compton wondered aloud, as they entered the town.

'It was a bought cake. One can always tell,' Colonel Mainwaring said. And then, adding a note of joviality to his tone, he concluded: 'Well, I hope we may meet there again next Sunday. I shall ring up in a day or two and ask how the old gentleman is.' He lifted his hat. 'I am afraid this is where I get off. Good-bye. Good-bye.' Carefully he buttoned his gloves.

'Good-bye,' she said with regret. And then he had gone.

IAIN SCOTT-KILVERT

FOUR POEMS FROM CAVAFY

CHE FECE IL GRAN RIFIUTO

To some men there befalls a fatal day
Demanding the great Yes or the great No.
He who holds the Yes ready within him
Is instantly revealed, and speaking forth
Stands ranged with honour and his own strong faith.
For him who refuses there is no repentance,
And if again challenged again he would refuse.
And yet that No, however just,
Shall overwhelm him all his life to come.

DESIRES

As the beautiful bodies of the dead
Which have not grown old,
But are laid away with tears in some shining tomb,
Roses at their head and jasmine at their feet,
Even so are desires that pass without fulfilment,
Those longings which never taste the ecstasy
Even of a single night, a single dazzling morning.

THE AFTERNOON SUN

This room, how well I know it!
Now it is let, this and next door
For business offices.
The whole house has become an office block
For promoters, and merchants, and companies.
Ah! this room, how I know every inch of it.
Close to the door was our sofa,
And in front of it a Turkish carpet,
And nearby the shelf with the two yellow vases.

On the right, no, opposite stood a cupboard with a mirror,
In the centre of the room was the table where he used to
write,
And the three big cane chairs,
Next to the window was the bed;
Where we made love so many times

These wretched things must still be knocking around
somewhere!

Next to the window was the bed,
And the afternoon sun would steal halfway up it.

It was at four in the afternoon that we parted,
Just for a week . . . Alas,
That week became forever.

COLOURED GLASS

There is one detail which greatly moves me
At the coronation, in Vlachernae, of John Cantacuzene
And Irene, daughter of Andronikus Asan.
Since they possessed few gems of any value
(So great was the poverty of our unhappy empire)
They resorted to artificial stones,
And decked themselves in glass jewelry, coloured red and
green and blue.

And yet I find nothing cheap nor unbecoming
In these scraps of coloured glass
Rather I find them a bitter reproach to fate
Against the undeserved ill fortune of the pair

For these are the symbols of their true estate
Of the magnificence which was after all their due

At the coronation of an Emperor John Cantacuzene
And an Empress Irene, daughter of Andronikus Asan.

JIM PHELAN

JOHNNY THE RAG

Half two, sir, the bus comes back. Aye, half two. Only one a day now, this time of year, after the October fair. They run two in the summer, when people comes up to look at the scenery. But it's few strangers you'll see in a little hill-village in winter. Aye, few indeed.

A pint, and thanks. Good health, sir. Aye, not till half two, the bus. You have over an hour. But sure it's a fine dry day, and anyway it stops just outside the bar door there. Half two.

Indeed you may say that, sir. Indeed I do remember it with no bus at all. A lonely little place it was, them times. Sure what's in a hill-village, in winter time especially, when it's twenty mile to the town and no way of getting in or out?

Sure the carrier's cart was all we had years ago, twice a week and maybe once a month in winter, with ice on the mountain road that a horse couldn't walk five yard leave alone twenty mile. Being cut off like that makes people miss a lot, aye indeed. But I always think it makes them quicker in some ways.

Yes, sir, all my life I've been here. Sure I remember the place without even a carrier's cart, without anything at all that went in or out by the town. A long time ago, that was. Eighty-five I am, or will be in December if God spares me. Aye, they say it's a good age, and every day of it here or hereabouts.

Begging your pardon, sir, I will if you're so good. A pint, please. Not wanting to beg from you, sir, or from anyone, but I'd like another all right. Molly—a pint here. A pint for oul' Johnny the Rag.

That's what the childher call me, sir, oul' Johnny the Rag. Playing like. Sure it does no harm. Although it's

only nine year or so that they say it. But childher grows up, aye indeed. There's that girl behind the bar, Molly, now. You'd be thinking I might remember her mother.

Well, sir, I remember coming in here for my first pint, just over seventy year ago. Seventy year. I got a liking for the drop of black stuff early, before I was fifteen. In here I came, and who served me? Young Molly's great-grandmother. Aye indeed, time passes.

Well now, that's what you might call strange, for you to be looking at the notice. Slievacattrra, that's what it says on it, isn't that right? Sale of valuable farm and stock, at Slievacattrra.

I can't read, but the boys told me what was on the words, on account of oul' times like. Sure everyone here knows about it, and the luck I had, and the blessing of God that came my way to live so long, and the kindness there is in the world. Aye, Slievacattrra.

It's strange for you to be reading that notice. Because that's where I was born, above in Slievacattrra farm, and my father and his father, God rest them. Aye, the great changes that comes, and they all for the best.

Oh, indeed and it's right, sir, although I can see that you find it hard to believe. Indeed it's right. That was my home, and that's the size of it, what you read out, three hundred and sixty-five acres.

Sure I used to have a joke, here in this very bar, when I was a young man, about that. I'd say it was easy for me to know the size of Slievacattrra—an acre for every day in the year, and a few rocks and holes for leap years. Aye, three hundred and sixty-five acre. A powerful farm, sure enough, a powerful farm.

Well, no, sir, not exactly sell it. I didn't what you could say sell it, but the same thing near enough, éxcept that I stayed there. Thirty odd year I stayed there, after Jem Harney, God rest him, had the place. Thirty odd year.

Thank you kindly, sir. A pint, please. And good health. No, not a story. There's no story about it.

Nothing like that, only the foolishness of some people and the goodness of others, and the way things turn out for the best.

Not a story. It's just that I was never one to have much sense, about money or affairs or things like that. Indeed God was good to me, that I didn't ruin myself with drink or wildness, or maybe ruin Slievacattra as well.

But sure I never got the chance, and it was as well in the end. For to tell you the truth, sir, I was never much in the way of looking after things, and early fond of the drop of black stuff, before I was fifteen, when Molly's great-grandmother was here.

Jem Harney now, there was an industrious man, and a God-fearing pious man too, that never left a penny unpaid or neglected whatever he ought to do. From somewhere beyond the mountains they came—oh, it must be sixty years ago or more, a sickly man and the wife not well either, and Jem a big growing boy.

The bit of a shop they had, with next to nothing in it, but sure they were good, decent, hard-working people, and they got on. No bus nor nothing in them days, of course, sir, and if Mickey Harney had but a few salt herrings and a bit of ling in the shop, sure people was glad to buy them and the Harneys got on.

Then the oul' people died and Jem had the little shop that was a bit bigger by that time, and he got on even better. An industrious man, aye indeed, and thoughtful. I remember the day he came up to Slievacattra, and told me to my face that I was digging my own grave, with the wild ways of me, and sure I was.

This was after the October fair—aye, it's forty-five year back, next October fair, since Jem came up to me first. I'd been wild around the village here, for a week, like I always done at such times, and when the money was gone there was only Jem Harney to find me half a sovereign for a drink. Sure everyone else knew me too well, and I'd owe them all by that time.

Not that I didn't pay them, sir. Indeed I did, always, after a burst-out like that. I suppose it was that the people didn't want to be bothered with a man on the drink for days and days, or maybe that they wanted to get me to go back home. Maybe.

But as sure as goat isn't mutton the day would come, when I'd be on a burst after the harvest, that no one in the village would give me a pound or even a shilling or even a drink, trying to get me to go home I suppose. Only Jem always stood by me, like a friend, no matter how drunken or draggled I'd be.

That first time he came up to Slieve, God forgive me, I spoke him rough. Digging my own grave, that's what he said I was doing, and so I was. Out straight and in friendship he offered to look after things for me, and I had no better sense than to speak him rough.

But thank God he wasn't one to hold ill-will for anyone. No indeed, and it was a good thing for me, too. For as sure as the April fair came round, so sure was I off on the burst again, and then a week later being refused a drink or even a shilling in every bar for a mile around.

It was then Jem Harney showed he was a Christian man, and bore no ill-will for my hard words. A golden sovereign he gave me, there in the corner of the tap-room beyond, and cautioned me to go home. But sure a sovereign was a lot of money them days, and indeed I didn't go home at all, until three days after, when Jem had found me a few shillings more, just to finish the burst as I used to say.

Nor never troubled me for the money he didn't, not until after I'd paid everyone else. The last one I paid in the year he was, Jem Harney, and sure by that time it was October fair again and I was on the burst again and round to Jem at the end.

He came up to me after that, a few weeks after, and begged me with tears in his eyes, aye, tears, to live more sensible and not to be on the burst at harvest time, and to

let someone look after my place. Sure that time I was worse than before, although not insulting or rough. Because that time I thought, God forgive me, that Jem wanted to buy Slievacattra for himself. And it never entering his mind.

Three year went before me and Jem came to agree, and indeed he must have been many a half-sovereign out of pocket in them three year. Until at last I saw he had kindness in his mind and had everything fixed for my good. It was only then I saw what a fool I'd been, all that time, not to have it Jem's way.

It's the oul'-fashioned business, about not wanting to leave your own home, that's what was the matter with me. But sure Jem had me in mind all the time, never intended that I should. I wasn't to go at all, but to stay there where I'd been born, and be looked after, and not be a fool to myself and everyone else any more. Jem was right of course, Jem was right.

In per-pet-uity. That's what it said on the paper the lawyer made out. And what a day I had in the city that day, when me and Jem went in to see the lawyer and sign the papers. Don't be talking—sure poor Jem could hardly get me home, I had such a burst-out.

In per-pet-uity. It meant that Jem had to take Slievacattra, aye and work it too, for perpetual freehold. That means for ever. A long time. The other thing was that I was to live there, and have my home, and have my meals, and everything, for all the days of my life. It was all down on the paper, and no one could get around it. But, of course Jem Harney wasn't the man to try to get around it, nor to go back on a bargain. Not Jem.

Of course there was no differ at all when Jem and the wife moved in, barring that there was more company like, above in Slieve. The house was livelier, and everything was right, and well looked after. No differ at all there wasn't, what with it being a hard year on lambs and then the floods so that the spring ploughing was late. Sure I

was out late and early, up and round them hill-fields and down by the river pastures, the same as any hard year, and it done me good. Jem too.

I can tell you Jem didn't spare himself, whenever he got the chance around Slieve. He had a bit of another little shop by that time, and a corn-and-potato stores, over there where the bus garage is now. So he hadn't a lot of time for the hill-fields and the river pastures, but every minute he had he worked. Aye, an industrious man, more nor ever I was.

So there was little or nothing changed, above at Slieve. Barring as I say that the house was tidier and more lively, and my meals was regular, not like when I would be off stravaguing around here and there, before Jem and the wife came.

Sure I'd never had regular meals or regular anything else in my life. But now every time the hired man sat down I was sat down too, and you'd think Mrs. Harney was my own sister, she fed me that well. My own room I had too, like it was in the paper, to live like a king and nothing to worry about.

To tell you the truth, sir, it was a bit of a heart-scalding the first time the October fair came round, with me pawing the ground almost, and a cock-pheasant's feather in my hat, all ready to go. But I could see afterwards that Jem was right, aye indeed. Although it was a bit of a heart-scalding, that first time.

Three hundred pound Jem put in the bank that October, what I'd have threw away, just injuring myself too, inside a few weeks. Injuring myself, that's what Jem and the wife told me, and I could see they were right.

But there was always the thoughtful side to Jem, and he could see I missed the oul' October ways. Five gold sovereigns he gave me, that October, into my hand, and sure you couldn't have heard them jingling before I was here in the village and having my own kind of a little burst-out, aye indeed.

That's how it was, above on Slievacattra, year in and year out, and I with no more chance to do myself harm, and regular meals and a room of my own, and company in the house. Sure I was the better man for it, a hundred times over, Father Gambin told me. That was Mrs. Harney's brother, that had known me and Slievacattra all his life, and ought to know. A hundred times the better man, indeed I was.

So there was nothing I wanted for, nothing, and me and Jem never had a cross word, barring once or twice about me taking drinks from people in the village here. But of course he was right, and in a way it would be bringing shame and disgrace on him, for me to be taking drinks from people, I saw that plain when he told me. Besides, there was never an October fair that I hadn't my three or four pound, or two anyway, to do whatever I liked with. Sure I needn't tell you what that was, sir, no indeed.

There it came along, from year to year, and Slieve improving out of all knowledge, and the Harneys with two childher above, everyone contented and happy and no harm done to ourselves nor no one else. There was times, at first, when the childher was growing up, that it came near making me a bit sad like. But sure childher doesn't understand things, of course.

Young Jemmy'd kick me, in play, and call me a dirty oul' beggar that was living on his daddy, or little Maureen'd say I should sleep in the barn. But sure they were only childher and there was no harm in it. Besides, if Mrs. Harney was there herself and heard it, she was never long about telling the childher they should speak more kind. Never.

Poor Jem, God rest him. He was the busy man, and sure farming makes the best of us short at times, maybe with a baste and maybe with a workman. Don't I know it myself, after seventy-six year of farming—it's only nine year now that the village childher call me oul' Johnny the Rag. Don't I know it.

This was a hard year with lambs, too, twelve or fourteen year after Jem came. Sure it was a time God Almighty might lose his temper on a farm, with snow-drifts neck deep in places and the ewes gone off into the hills and labour there was none, only me and Jem. Aye, it was a time any man might get short, with his own brother leave alone the likes of me.

I should have been out, on the hill above Slieve, this morning, after the lambs, sure enough, not in the kitchen after a cup of tea. But the fact was I'd been out all night, and most of the night before, and the whole day, around on them hills in the snow. Them hills is no joke in snow, sir, I can tell you, but sure I knew them like the back of my hand, no one better, and maybe it was that made Jem a bit short.

It was all over and done with and forgot about in no time. But you could see he felt it just the same. You see, sir, he was a fine powerful hardy lump of a man, God rest him, and what's a man to do if he's drove to bad temper with work and worry, besides not knowing I'd been out on the hills all night.

You could see he was sorry, the minute he'd knocked the tea out of my hand and kicked me out of the kitchen door. Lambing time is worrying time. But sure it was all forgot in an hour or two. And Mrs. Harney herself gave me a shilling with her own hand.

Many a time since I've been glad there was no bad feeling with me and Jem, many a time. He spoke out straight and manly, that morning, on our way down to the river pastures after the ewes, and told me not to mind his ways. Indeed I was glad he done that, many a time since.

But sure I often wished, too, that Jem hadn't gave so much attention to telling me about his ways and his bit of short temper and the like. Because natural enough he didn't know Slievacattra like I did. No. Not many knew Slieve, as well as me, ever.

Coming in a flat down one of the river pastures we were, and it looking as level as a bar table, when Jem went. Just vanished, sir, like a three-card trickster hiding the queen. Poulduff my father used to call the place—the black hole. But sure it all looked as level as a bar table, with the snow on it and everything. Sure it was four days before they got what was left of Jem, God rest him, amen. A good straight man, and thoughtful, barring a bit of temper at lambing time or the like.

Then things went on like before, and young Jemmy was as good a man as his father, to me and to everybody. The mother, too, was as kind as could be, always seeing I had my meals regular, and my own room, and nothing changed. Years passed and hardly ever a cross word from anyone, for oul' Johnny. Years.

There was once, a long time after Jem, God rest him, that I nearly went away from Slieve—and sure I don't know where I'd have gone to!—but I didn't. It was a bit of temper was on Jemmy on account of the ploughing, but it blew over, thank God.

Mrs. Harney was dead, God be good to her, and Jemmy was a big strong lump of a man, not married yet, and young Maureen was gone in America on account of some bit of trouble. So Jemmy and me had Slieve to ourselves, barring two hired men and a servant girl, everything going on like before.

In a way, I suppose it was strange, sir, but it's a fact Jemmy was near as bad as I'd been. There wasn't an October fair that he wouldn't be on the burst-out, and no hundreds going in the bank now, either—sure it was woeful to think of all the kindness his father had planned and it coming to nothing. Barring that it was Jemmy came on the burst-out here, not me, sir, as of course you'll understand. Everything else was the same.

This time I nearly left Slieve was after an October fair. Jemmy came back a week later, and him with a bit of a head on him the same as I often had myself, and in a bad humour

I needn't say. Sure I wouldn't mind what he said at all. But it's a fact he was a big lump of a man, and near fifty year younger nor myself.

A dirty sponging waster he called me, that's as true as God's my judge, sir, but natural I wouldn't mind that, him being after a burst-out. But the anger came in him, when he got fighting mad because he said I was eating him out of house and home, and after all, sir, fifty year younger is a lot. So I made my mind to go away, wherever it might be.

Then the next morning it was all to laugh at. No harm done at all, neither to me nor Jemmy, and I was glad of that. Half a crown he gave me, to come down here and get myself a drink and forget about it all, and not to mind him being a bit rough, when the drink would be on him. Sure I didn't mind, not me. But I wished after, aye, I wished I hadn't come down here to get the drink.

You see, sir, Slievacattra's a hill-farm, and if you don't know what that means I'll tell you. It means rocks, everywhere except where you want them, everywhere that's in the way and awkward. That's what a hill-farm means. Sure I should know, that was born above in Slieve, but many another wouldn't.

It must have been nine ton, the rock that came down in a corner of the hill-field where Jemmy was readying the plough, God rest him. Sure I've never forgave myself, for not telling him it was ready to fall, and me down here drinking his half-crown at the time. I've never forgave myself.

Well, sir, that was nearly the end of Slievacattra for the Harneys. There was some kind of law-business, and it came out that a man from beyond the mountains owned Slieve, some relation of Mrs. Harney's that was. But sure you'd think there was something wrong with the place, for that family, indeed you would.

Four month he was above at Slieve, and dealing fair with me, or fair enough seeing that he didn't know me from a

stranger. Meals I had like before, and I suppose he'd have gave me a room too but he was wanting the place for his family later, and anyway the barn was cosy enough. Four month and that's all, and he was gone eleven days before they fished his body out of the river, fifteen mile away.

So it's nine year now I've been oul' Johnny the Rag, around the village here, and the kindness of people is a marvel. For it's the God's truth, sir, there's more of the black stuff now—and sure I love it—than there's ever been this forty year, since Jem, God rest him, came to look after me first. Aye, more indeed.

Sure it's a great thing to be alive, and eighty-five year old, when a man thinks of all the decent well-meaning people that's dead and gone. There's the notice now, on the wall, and that's the end of Slievacattra. Belongs to the Government or something now, and it's been sold to-day. Sure it's not what poor decent Jem Harney planned, but it's hard for a stranger to know the hill-farms and hill-people. Poor Jem, he tried his best, God be good to him.

Indeed, I will, of course, and thanks. A pint, sir. Good health to——. There y'are, sir. There's the half two bus. Good-bye and good luck.

LOUIS MACNEICE

RELICS

Obsolete as books in leather bindings
Buildings in stone like talkative ghosts continue
 Their well-worn anecdotes
As here in Oxford shadow the dark-weathered
Astrakhan rustication of the arches
 Puts a small world in quotes:

While high in Oxford sunlight playfully crocketed
Pinnacles, ripe as corn on the cob, look over
 To downs where once without either wheel or hod
Ant-like, their muscles cracking under the sarsen,
Shins white with chalk and eyes dark with necessity
 The Beaker People pulled their weight of God.



NORMAN NICHOLSON

SONG BY AN ESTUARY

If the wind dints the pool
Like a hand pressed on flesh;
If the gull crimps the sand
With three-twigged feet; if the cool
Tides of light ebb back from the eyes,
And the land is grey as the sea and the sea is brown as
the land;

If the sand eddies and ripples,
And a brown wave breaks
In a shake of crabs and celluloid;
If the dry sea topples
Over the void of the skyline,
And the mud sucks at the sea-weed's nipples;

If the shelducks blow and bell
Over the graves of the guides,
Long drowned in sand,
When time is empty as a drained shell,
Oh let the tides of the sky, the tides
Of the heart, flow up the shores,
Filling the moment as a fog of stars
Poured in a basin of rock,
That the wrack of days, the thrice-twenty-
Times dry and aching month
Be flooded by this hour's bright plenty.

BERNARD SPENCER

TWO POEMS

ON A CARVED AXLE-PIECE FROM A SICILIAN CART

The village craftsman stirred his bravest yellow
and (all the carpentry and carving done)
put the last touches to his newest cart,
until no playing-card had brighter panels;
with crested knights in armour, king and crown
Crusaders slaughtering infidels, and crimson
where the blood laves:
and took his paintpot to that part
around the axle where a Southern memory
harking back out of Christendom, imagined
a chariot of glory
and Aphrodite riding wooden waves.

So some tanned peasant paid his money down
and till the years
put a full-stop to him or his purchase, jaunted
half around Sicily with wood for the fire,
long muscat grapes
or tangerines for the market in the town.
Thus answering, as his fathers' fathers had,
those metaphysical gaps and fears
which drain the blood of the age or drive it mad;
Who is God? Where do I come from? Are we dying?

—With a salty way of speech; with tasselled harness
with a cart to match the sea and all the flowers;
with Roger the Christian and Palermo towers;
and in between the dusty wheels
the Queen of Love in a yellow gown,

featured like a peasant child,
her three red horses rearing from the foam
and their carved manes blown wild.

ON THE ROAD

Our roof was grapes, and the broad hands of the vine
as we two drank in the vine-chinky shade
of harvest France:
and wherever the white road led we could not care;
it had brought us there
to the arbour built on a valley side where Time,
if Time any more existed, was that river
of so profound a current, it at once
both flowed and stayed.

We two. And nothing in the whole world was lacking.
It is later one realizes. I forget
the exact year or what we said. But the place
for a lifetime glows with noon; there are the rustic
table and the benches set; across the river
forests as soft as fallen clouds; and in
our wine and eyes I remember other noons.
It is a lot to say, nothing was lacking.
River, sun and leaves; and I am making
words to say 'grapes' and 'her skin.'

THE CRITICAL VIEW

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PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

STRATFORD AT THE CROSSROADS

Does Stratford do for Shakespeare what Salzburg does for Mozart? This is one of those questions defined in the Latin Grammar as 'expecting the answer No.' In fairness, one must at once follow up with 'Does Stratford want to?' and if it is No again, and 'Ought it to want to?'

Here I think we come to an affirmative. If there is one clear idea in the present world chaos it seems to be that if only the nations could hear and see more of each other's culture they may yet avoid having to atomize each other. It is easy to smile at such liberal flum-dum in these cynical days; could we have avoided the last war with more Goethe and less Goebbels? It does seem doubtful. But whether it has a political role to play or not, Stratford, in the present mental climate, can hardly remain a merely local and national institution, or merely the centre of the Shakespeare industry; given government's aid or not, it is being jockeyed into the position of the 'Mecca of all bard-lovers' (an idea and a phrase which would have horrified Shakespeare).

Unquestionably many Americans, many other Europeans too, regard Stratford in this light and are prepared to brave all the obstacles that we put in their way. Moreover, exalted persons show no diminution of interest; even film stars, if one may believe the advance publicity, attend the festival; and sit, no doubt, with set, uncomprehending smiles. As for ordinary citizens, they stay there in ones and twos, and families of ten, and go night after night (at the end of the season anyway; Sir Barry Jackson's new

plan, of starting the repertory gradually, means that the plays are now properly rehearsed but, of course, limits the choice severely during the first few weeks). And then there are the diehards, too, who come by coach, train or cycle; stand doggedly in the rain waiting for the disgusting lunch at the Measure for Measure tea-rooms; queue for seats; stand through the performance and no doubt walk home at the end of it.

This brings me to an important but quite unæsthetic issue. It is this: if there is to be a festival, it should truly be festive. When people have come a long way and have sat through five hours of Hamlet, they want food and drink and a well-lighted place to discuss the performance afterwards. The town can look very pretty on a fine evening, but its welcome strikes me (and would, I think, strike most foreign visitors too) as curiously unimaginative. The chances are that at the end of the performance you will be decanted into pouring rain, sans light, food, transport or even a cup of cocoa. One of the first things Stratford has to do is to make up its mind that it is a tourist centre and that this means not just double prices but service with a smile, and real service. If necessary it also means a government grant. As usual, by means of various 'councils' the government is managing to spend some taxpayers' money on Shakespearean culture, but as usual is not (in my view) getting full value for money.

The other major trouble is the Memorial Theatre itself. I am not going to involve myself in discussion of the architecture; the look of it, or its value as a riverside monument. It has unquestionably many good points, but they are not, I fear, the good points of a Shakespeare theatre. For opera, for ballet, yes. The big stage, deep and mysterious; the mighty cyclorama which can reduce everyone on that stage to the stature of a faceless puppet (just the job for distracting attention from a squalling Brünhilde); the huge 'orchestra' gulf which effectively puts the actor into another world from that of the audience—

all that is bad enough. But there is worse. A play seen from upstairs is not the same as the play seen from the stalls. The actor who stands up-stage is a completely different creature in voice, size and personality from the same actor standing mid-stage or down-stage. Everything conspires against maintaining that intimate 'rapport' between player and audience which is the essence of Shakespearean drama and the only productions which succeed in disguising this fact either do so by offering something else (something non-Shakespearean) or by turning their backs completely on all the resources of the theatre and huddling the action on to an improvised apron-stage—when at least one gets something of the right intimacy, even if not half as well as in many a humble drill-hall.

Do I exaggerate? Very likely. But these troubles ought to be kept in mind when you hear about the producer playing too big a role at Stratford or when you hear talk of colourless Stratford acting. Most players are more or less consciously aware of the trouble; audiences especially if used to Shakespeare in other and better theatres wonder what is wrong. The effect of Shakespeare as they are used to it in say the Haymarket Theatre or in The Old Vic in the Waterloo Road or in the Theatre Royal at Bristol they simply do not experience here.

There it is—unquestionably a handicap, I think, for Shakespeare, but one which has to be accepted and which clever producers may even somehow turn to advantage. And Sir Barry Jackson, whatever else, is certainly not afraid of clever producers; he has a trunk full of them, each with a personal bag of tricks.

Yet it affects the policy of the festival probably more than the sponsors care to acknowledge; for it means that it is this kind of clever production, the kind that 'gets away with it' rather than really well-studied and richly-acted performances, which tends to be the successes. More especially it favours productions which please the eye at the expense of the ear—which make, to put it crudely,

a good show and damn the poetry. In these days, the heyday of the cinema and the canned concert (at Stratford the music is canned, a significant if small pointer), eyes are used far more critically than ears. There may be good in that. We have tended in this country to neglect the plastic side of acting rather badly and if the special drawbacks of the Stratford Theatre reaffirm the expressive value of movement and attitude in the total effect of a part, so much the better. But, of course, it has its dangers, too. Whatever else, you don't as a general rule want to turn Shakespeare into ballet and it has to be conceded that of Stratford's chief successes (since the new dispensation) several have been successes of that order.

True, the effect with certain plays has been revivifying. One has known incredibly dull productions of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and Peter Brook's original and highly imaginative handling of that early but delightful play certainly succeeded in steering clear of dullness. In his hands the king became not so much a masque as a sort of inspired Watteau-esque *fête-champêtre*, all atmospherics and attitudes: something to linger long in the mind's eye. This production, which used all the resources of the theatre, set the play for our eyes in the kind of climate which it must have had for its first audience, and was therefore, I think, entirely justified, a deft fantasmagoria of a highly artificial species. Conceived in this way it could make do with acting that was highly un-Shakespearean in being apparently unconscious of its audience; the characters seemed to be all playing to amuse each other (if you feel the distinction). There was, in fact, some very beautiful acting, led (when I saw it last year) by David King-Wood's Berowne who had tremendous pace, mobility and raillery. The evening was full of delightfully witty strokes of comedy or 'applied' fooling (nothing really to do with Shakespeare) and whimsicality suited to modern notions.

But the attempt to produce *Romeo and Juliet* with something of the same originality as an opening to the Festival

this year showed just how dangerous such experiment can be. In spite of much first-rate acting the play never really seized its audience and was watched with just that fatal emotional detachment which we have previously ascribed to the villainy of the theatre itself. But it was as due in large measure to Peter Brook's handling of the play which meant so much to him simply as a romance that he encouraged the lovers to run at their parts with the abandon of young co-eds; and which meant so little to him as a moral legend of two warring houses that he cut the final scene of reconciliation and stopped the play where Gounod stopped his opera. Moreover, one would say, he allowed his feeling for the possibilities of the crowd scenes to run away with his sense, not merely of proportion, but, more surprisingly, of atmosphere as well. This whirling, turbulent stage space, with its little islands of realistic detail (like snippets from a Carpaccio panel) invoked the period but it gave no feeling of the walled city which (if any illusion of the kind is to be given at all) is surely the logical one to aim at. The *va-et-vient* became more important than the sound of the poetry; the Capulets' house, a sort of lovely box floating in the void, was an invitation to the dance but did no service as a setting for those scenes. It was indeed a most exciting affair to look at; but the excitement, even if it flattered the *genius loci*, did not well serve the genius of the dramatist. It was the sort of thing which, seen in Moscow or Prague, would have your festival visitor in ecstasies—or would have had twenty years ago. At the Vaktangov Theatre Tairov once put on a hotch-potch play for his wife, compounded of the Cleopatras of Shakespeare, Shaw and Pushkin. It was exciting and boring in much the same sort of way.

But this is not to give the impression that the gifted and youthful Peter Brook is the only producer. On the contrary one of Sir Barry Jackson's wisest innovations was to get a different producer for each play and, as it is at this moment, the festival exhibits an extremely wide range of the various possible styles of producing Shakespeare

(including even what we may think of as the Stratford special style). The *Measure for Measure*, for instance, a capital attempt to stage a play which nearly always just eludes the sympathy of a modern audience, was the work of an American, Professor MacMullen from Yale; a production which recalled Reinhardt in many ways (those tolling bells at the ends of scenes, those highly fantasticated costumes which somehow suggested Bavarian humours). There was Nugent Monck's *Cymbeline* which most successfully represented Roman Britain in terms of Shakespearean dress and stagecraft (as far as 'placing' on the stage was concerned). There was a gallant attempt to stage Marlowe's *Faustus* by Walter Hudd, using a permanent set of Elizabethan pattern erected at a strategic point in the middle of the stage which helped to focus Robert Harris's very beautiful speaking of the part. (In passing one must say how ill the play goes on any stage—it is two great peaks of poetry separated by a gulf of dullness and no producer could get over the difficulty of showing convincingly what *Faustus* sold his soul *for*; those visions defy stagecraft and were here uncomfortably 'arty.' Here indeed was a chance for the sort of ballet fantasy which so often tempts the Stratford producer—a chance not taken.)

But it is not within the scope of this article to list and describe all the current productions at Stratford. The policy now makes it possible to take over the more successful from one year to the next, and certain of them will probably become 'established.' Sir Barry Jackson has on the whole too much rather than too little producer-talent available. One of the latest recruits is Michael Benthall who has interesting productions of such different dramatists as Webster and Puccini to his credit. He was responsible for this year's *Merchant of Venice*, a production which provoked critical reaction of just the kind you might imagine from the foregoing: general praise for the charm and beauty of the scene and a vague bewilderment that the play did not strike home with its usual effect.

But, of course, Stratford is not just a theatre and a list of producers. It is, above all, a company of players. Here I find much less to complain about than some of my colleagues. It depends, I suppose again on what you consider ought to be the standard. No doubt the Shakespearean acting seen at Stratford ought to be the best in the world; the best actors ought to be tumbling over each other to receive the honour of being asked to play there. It should be (the odious catch phrase recurs) their 'Mecca.' And, of course, it isn't. On the contrary. Many actors simply will not 'bury' themselves at Stratford for the summer and the list of famous actors who have never played there is indeed an imposing one. It would greatly puzzle a foreigner. He would have to have it explained to him that one of the oddest things about our stage is in any case the number of famous actors and actresses who not only never play Shakespeare but show not the slightest desire to do so; who have often never read let alone seen some of the principal plays and who wouldn't want to play Shakespeare even in the West End, let alone 'down there.' One could name half a dozen young actresses of talent and striking-power to whom the idea would seem positively freakish. So one must not make too much of these abstentions.

It is a pity, though. There are many players who could ride over all the disadvantages of the theatre and hold the audience by sheer technical power, or by personality and skill combined. Recently I saw from the back of the pit of the Piccadilly Theatre that very distinguished player Fay Compton as Emilia doing precisely what one longs for actors to do at Stratford. A gulf of coughing stalls sundered us. Yet every gesture, every movement, every syllable struck home with full effect. If all the players at Stratford were players of that calibre there would be no trouble at all.

In fact, however, Sir Barry Jackson's policy does not even aim to rely on stars or star personality; and it may well be that he is right in valuing youth, freshness, eagerness

and the team spirit above everything else. Of course, the presence of stars need not rule out the team spirit—as witness many famous theatres outside England: the Moscow Arts, The Abbey or the Vienna Opera. It may well be that stars are not what Stratford needs. And to lend weight to this, one can point to the often truly wonderful results obtained in performances of Shakespeare by boys.

Any way, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and there can be no question that the present mixture of first-rate, versatile and highly conscientious artists together with young, almost untried talent has turned out wonderfully well sometimes. Last year, in spite of Valerie Taylor and Ruth Lodge among the women and that delicate and resourceful actor Robert Harris among the men, there was hardly enough weight. Yet at least one of the young unknowns turned up trumps—Paul Scofield whose Lucio (in *Measure*) and Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* were unmistakably the performances of a very gifted and appealing actor, with more than a touch of genius; and these he has followed up this year with a Mercutio and an Aguecheek which are right away from the tradition and yet compelling. Other portraits of that order have come from Beatrix Lehmann who was brought in (together with that very sure and satisfying actress Veronica Turleigh) to strengthen the company this year; her nurse in Romeo, a piece of casting one would have said to be right against the grain, came off in a strangely memorable way; a wry old tarter of a nurse instead of the usual Rubensian old vulgarian. Since no one can hold a candle to Dame Edith Evans in that particular line, a new approach was doubly welcome. She is this year's Viola and Portia, and has succeeded in giving these heroines a sharp outline where so often at Stratford one has seen them only as a pretty undistinguished blur. Her Viola, indeed, was one of those interpretations which lastingly affect one's notion of the part; in spite of much evidence to the contrary, this (one could not help feeling) must have been what Shakespeare

had in mind, a Viola who looked as much a boy as her brother and who, giving a bittersweet and rueful edge to music so often sentimentalized, put a new slant on the whole intrigue of the disguises. The comedy generally was excellent, the setting simple, and Mr. Hudd a Malvolio, once again, who made all the points.

'Pericles' was a disappointment, not even looking very nice. Nugent Monck's sensible and scholarly attempt to prune the play to its purely Shakespearean portions helped less than one had hoped and he did little (perhaps he is too good a Shakespearean to bring himself to the task) to 'put over' a play which might really be said to stand in need of an art-producer's touch. Here if anywhere was a case for fantastication, for there is only one really strong scene (the recognition; the famous brothel scene collapses half-way through) and so much else needs all the propping it can have. Daphne Slater's Marina was candid and touching; Paul Scofield was a grave and poetical but inevitably dull hero.

Walter Hudd is this year acting as well as producing—a great asset. Miles Eason has put forward a number of excellent performances and Laurence Payne, the new Romeo, was, in spite of everything, a Romeo of parts. Talented, genuinely talented, too, was his Juliet, Daphne Slater, later seen as Olivia. There is plenty of talent of all kinds; whether it is all of it the talent best suited to Stratford one would find it less easy to say unless on the spot more often. It needs an enormous and very versatile company to mount so many plays up to a real festival standard; and even if they were working in a theatre which was kind to Shakespeare they would still have a formidable task.

On the whole, though, without being foolishly optimistic, one can say that Sir Barry Jackson's new policies are bearing fruit. Stratford is at the crossroads but it has turned its face, one feels, in the right direction. It is going to be a hard road, all the same.

ROSAMOND LEHMANN

A NEGLECTED VICTORIAN CLASSIC

We have most of us enjoyed the game of wit in which a group of players selects a character well known to all and the questioner then tracks down and seizes him or her by means of analogical clues. What animal? What plant?—painter?—piece of music?—article of furniture?—smell?—vice?—virtue?—type of landscape? etc. etc. No subjects are better adapted to this game than the great literary figures of the Victorian age. Dickens, George Eliot, the Brontës—how intimately our fancy plays not only with their works but with their characters, their physical appearance! They appear before us, as symbolic and particular, as inconsistently consistent, as endearing, amusing and dreadful as our friends and relations.

If I were asking myself: Into what terms of landscape can Mrs. Gaskell be translated? I should reply without much hesitation: Mrs. Gaskell is an orchard. An English inland orchard, sheltered, fragrant, sweet and wholesome to taste. *Wives and Daughters*, her last novel, is also incomparably her richest and most satisfying. In it her creative imagination comes to its fullness—a fruit ripened as it were in a memorable year for bloom and crop. A great patient season of sun has gone to its maturing. The rains that have freshened it have been temperate and all propitious; and although there is age in it, there is also youth, renewal, the promise of next season's secret buds.

The first instalment appeared in the August number of *The Cornhill* of the year 1864. The last was published in the January number of 1866. Before that, in November, 1865, Mrs. Gaskell had died, suddenly, while sitting at tea before the drawing-room fire in her newly purchased country house, among her daughters and sons-in-law. The

novel remained unfinished, but most fortunately so near completion that no problems of interpretation, no alternative situations remain to tantalize us.

No doubt Mrs. Gaskell, intensely feminine as she was, is primarily a woman's author. Should *Cranford* be read aloud to an audience in which the female members predominate over the male, whereas the former are apt to expand in sympathetic pleasure and self-esteem, the latter may succumb to low spirits: this can be vouched for from experience. But whereas 'everybody' has read *Cranford*, her masterpiece *Wives and Daughters* is comparatively, inexplicably neglected. Certainly the same qualification applies: if ever there was a book by a woman, here it is. Mrs. Gaskell was a beautiful happily married woman of the prosperous middle class, philanthropic, devout without dogmatism, tolerant but impatient of cant and humbug, a devoted mother, a tactful and unselfish friend. Her manners were perfect and her conversation entertaining. Her career from *Mary Barton* onwards was one of uninterrupted success and popularity, but she remained without a grain of pretension or self-importance. There was one tragedy in her life, the death at the age of three of her little boy, the only son in her family of four. With the exception of Mrs. Carlyle, who found 'an atmosphere of moral dullness about her,' her contemporaries unite to praise her beauty of person and of character, the aura of exceptional charm and goodness which she radiated. She was then, for the Victorian age—for any age—an unusually fulfilled and integrated woman; and *Wives and Daughters* reflects in placid luminosity the wholeness of a distinguished feminine nature. A woman's novel but no more a mere novel for woman than *Emma* or *Villette*. True, a misanthropist might be repelled by its resolute inclination to think hopefully, forgivingly of human nature; yet, surely, in its breadth and generosity of scope, in its fun, its compassion, its quiet irony and uncorrupted pathos, in the fineness and subtlety of its character drawing, it constitutes a world

of irresistible comfort and pleasure for any reader, no matter of what sex. It is a book we love when we are young; but our admiration for its impeccable good taste and sensibility can only deepen as the years go on: it could never appear a youthful indiscretion, or give out that hollow ring of fictional experiences outworn. Besides, the book must have a permanent value to the student of social history. Mrs. Gaskell may not altogether succeed, imaginatively and intellectually, in grasping industrial problems in such works as *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, but in the social structure of *Wives and Daughters* she is completely at home: the apparently unalterable, rigidly stratified class pattern of the countryside into which she was born in the early part of the nineteenth century. She records its manners and customs, its habits of speech, of dress, even its taste in furniture and furnishing stuffs, on every level—'county' in all its degrees, professional man, tradesman, serving man, labourer—with an unerring eye and ear for truth of detail: or well-nigh unerring: for is there not a touch of crude caricature in that colossus of arrogant insensibility, the Countess of Cumnor, in one or two passages such as the following:

'You know me well enough to know that I am not the person, nor is The Towers the house to go about soliciting guests. But in this instance I bend my head; high rank should always be the first to honour those who have distinguished themselves in art and service'?

On the other hand, her daughter, Lady Harriet, is admirably done: her offhand upper-class insolence, her impulsive good nature, her cool wit make her both true to type and convincing as an individual. Or take the whole of the chapter called 'A Charity Ball,' in which every strand of local society is assembled and interwoven with superb skill, accuracy and wit. Or take the minor incident of Squire Hamley's visit to the death-bed of his old workman Silas:

"I thought you'd come, Squire. Your father came for to see my father, as he lay a-dying."

“Come, come, my man!” said the Squire, easily affected as he always was. “Don’t talk of dying; we shall soon have you out, never fear! They’ve sent you up some soup from the Hall, as I bade ’em, haven’t they?”

“Ay, ay, I’ve had all as I could want for to eat and to drink. The young Squire and Master Roger was here yesterday.”

“Yes, I know.”

“But I’m a deal nearer heaven to-day, I am. I should like you to look after the covers in the West Spinney, Squire; them gorse, you know, where the old fox had her hole, her as gave ’em so many a run. You’ll mind it, Squire, though you was but a lad. I could laugh to think on her tricks yet.”

And with a weak attempt at a laugh, he got himself into a violent fit of coughing, which alarmed the Squire, who thought he would never get his breath again. His daughter-in-law came in at the sound, and told the Squire that he had these coughing bouts very frequently and that she thought he would go off in one of them before long. This opinion of hers was spoken simply out before the old man, who now lay gasping and exhausted upon his pillow. Poor people acknowledge the inevitableness and the approach of death in a much more straightforward manner than is customary among the more educated. . . . What she had just said was no more news to him than the fact that the sun would rise to-morrow. He was more anxious to go on with his story.

“Them navvies—I call ’em navvies because some of ’em is strangers, though some on ’em is the men turned off your own works, Squire, when there came orders to stop ’em last fall—they’re a-pulling up gorse and brush to light their fire for warming up their messes. It’s a long way off to their homes, and they mostly dine here; and there’ll be nothing of a cover left, if you don’t see after ’em. I thought I should like to tell ye, afore I died. Parson’s been here; but I did na tell him. He’s all for the Earl’s folk and he’d not ha’ heeded. It’s the Earl as put him into his church, I reckon; for he said, what a fine thing it were for to see so much employment a-given to the poor, and he never said nought o’ the sort when your works were agait, Squire.”

Who but Mrs. Gaskell among the Victorians could record such a scene with just that tact and simplicity, that unsentimental, almost humorous brand of sympathy? No throb and moan of Mighty Wurlitzer, no sickly piety; the pathos allowed to spring without comment from the old countryman's matter-of-fact fatalism, his practical concern to put his affairs, which are all his master's affairs, in order before he dies.

And what writer before or since has excelled her in the evocation of a particular kind of rural English landscape?—a landscape temperate, mature, harmonious, composed of parkland and ploughland, of gardens and hedgerows and deep country lanes, of rustic cottages and church spires and mansions half-hidden in their swelling screens of wood. She is a poet, in the true, traditional pastoral vein; embedded in the texture of her work like wild flowers in a meadow, her descriptive passages have a flawless delicacy, fragrance and freshness.

The most interesting among the few accounts of Mrs. Gaskell's work is to be found in Lord David Cecil's *Early Victorian Novelists*, published in 1934. His essay on her is in many ways penetrating, just and warmly appreciative; yet he seems on the whole a shade inclined to snatch back with one hand the garlands he proffers with the other. His offhand sketch of her as 'a typical Unitarian minister's wife,' bounded by her drawing-room, content when she had finished her prayers and her personal tour of the parish 'to sit down and gossip to a neighbour about marriages and clothes and servants and children' is distinctly misleading. She did perform her wifely duties with devotion and efficiency; but in fact she was restless, travelled widely in France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy, loved Dante and Mozart, had intellectual curiosity and a distinguished circle of friends outside her parish. The world knows of her relations with Charlotte Brontë; and she was on terms of at least affectionate acquaintanceship with Dickens, Thackeray, Carlyle, F. W. Newman, Kingsley and many

others. Was this the life of a typical Victorian minister's wife? Besides, no novelist—at least no woman novelist—writes the worse for discussing, in her hours of leisure, marriage, children and servants. Jane Austen was much addicted to gossip; both Emily and Charlotte Brontë cooked, kept house and visited the poor. So did George Eliot, before she left her father's roof.

Again, Lord David Cecil says: 'The drawing-room walls hid most of man's life from her. . . . Huge, clumsy, hairy creatures incapable of understanding those aspects of life which most interested her, but awe-inspiring from their superior wisdom and strength, even when they did come into the drawing-room they baffled and flustered her.' There is not a single passage in *Wives and Daughters* that suggests—to one reader at least—that Mrs. Gaskell was thrown into a neurotic twitter by the presence of her male characters. True, there was much about men's lives that did not come within her line of vision; on the other hand, it seems to me that there was surprisingly much, for a Victorian woman, that did. Dr. Gibson is solid in his professional aspect, so is Squire Hamley as a landowner and a landlord. Again, Mr. Preston is no mere drawing-room figure, but a subtle and permanently valid portrait of a lady-killing cad. Certainly Mrs. Gaskell is far from outspoken about his animal passions; but the insistent sexuality of his manner with attractive women, his underlying contempt for them, his intuitive recognition, in the scene of Molly's recovery of his letters, that she is proof against his charms—all this, though interpreted within the literary conventions of the day, is the reverse of a 'baffled' approach. We do not need to be told what it is he counts on when he tells Cynthia that he can make her love him after she has married him. 'Tigerish,' says Cynthia, 'with his beautiful striped skin . . .' What echo teases us a moment? *The glossy male tiger, magnificently marked.* Mrs. Gaskell . . . Henry James? . . . A far cry indeed, but there it is.

'Her elderly men,' says Lord David Cecil, 'are not so

bad . . . As for her young men, they are terrible.' Roger Hamley, that prototype of manly virtues, brilliant, honest, true, tender Roger—can it be that he is 'terrible'? Alas, to look again at some remove from a youth not indeed Victorian but fervently immersed in Victorian literature, and doubtless emotionally arrested by the sexual ideals it embodies—to look again is to acknowledge that it is so. If to be terrible is to be an appalling prig, to moralize in such terms as: 'One has always to try to think more of others than of oneself,' to pull the distressed Molly up with 'something of severe brevity' for her failure to do so, to doubt his own worthiness to aspire to Molly's hand because he has once 'loved a person so inferior to herself as Cynthia'—then Roger Hamley is terrible. Yet, all the same and in spite of all, he seems to me basically like a virile young man; and, more than this, like a great natural historian-to-be. True, it is hard to believe in him as a Senior Wrangler, and his conversation in the home circle reflects no quality of mind; but great men, particularly great scientists, are not infrequently simple and conformist in their domestic aspects: one has only to read the introduction by Norah Barlow to the recently published *Charles Darwin and the Voyage of The Beagle* to realize the truth of this. Darwin was a kindly, good-tempered, high-minded young man, a devoted brother, a submissive son; he embarked on his famous voyage as a prelude to taking Holy Orders, and as a means of studying more closely the works of his Creator. There seems to have been little to mark him out either in ambition or intellectual receptiveness. Only, from childhood onwards, he was steadily, passionately absorbed in the study of nature in a vast variety of forms. Does not Mrs. Gaskell in her portrait of Roger give one the same sense of the combination of single-minded power and passion with natural unrevolutionary goodness?

Osborn Hamley is another matter, and seems to me to fail to carry any solid conviction. He is emasculate yet unconvincing in his feminine aspect since, although Mrs.

Gaskell stresses his girlish ways and beauty, the psychological conventions of her day exact that he should fall in love in a normal though clandestine way with a young woman. The whole business of his secret marriage to a French nursemaid is vaguely and perfunctorily treated. Such a passage, for instance, as the following fails to restore confidence in the reality of the affair.

‘It will be a month next Monday since I left her,’ said Osborne. . . . ‘In her letter this morning she bids me give you such a pretty message. . . .’

Roger suspected that one or two of the words were wrongly spelt; but their purport was so gentle and loving, and had such a touch of simple, respectful gratitude in them, that he could not help being drawn afresh to the little unseen sister-in-law, whose acquaintance Osborne had made by helping her to look for some missing article of the children’s whom she was taking for their daily walk in Hyde Park.

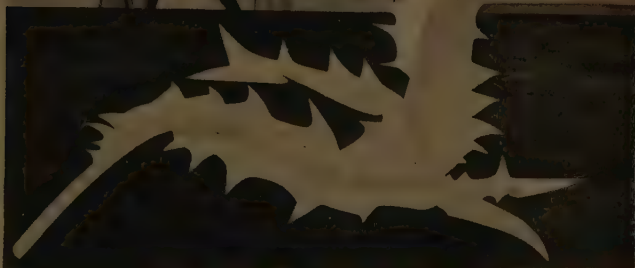
The whole episode is imaginatively destroyed by Mrs. Gaskell’s determination to bring no blush to the reader’s cheek. Because of this she fails, for once, in dealing with the heart, to explore emotional truth. The little grey-eyed bride-widow remains a lachrymose stock figure; and Osborne lives a shadow and drops dead in the ancestral grounds a shadow, leaving one with a sense of embarrassment at having to face the fact that he has so far forgotten himself as to have fathered a son somewhere near Winchester.

But let us examine Dr. Gibson. Surely he adds up to something far more positive than ‘not so bad.’ There is, surely, warm solid flesh and blood in his testiness, his magnanimity, his alternating sarcasm and tenderness. His pride is genuinely masculine, and his paternal feelings—although Mrs. Gaskell sees them, of course, with an unambiguous eye—sound the passionate and only relatively sexless complexities of the father-daughter relationship. He flirts with her, is jealous of her, excessively touchy when



Self-Portrait

London Gallery

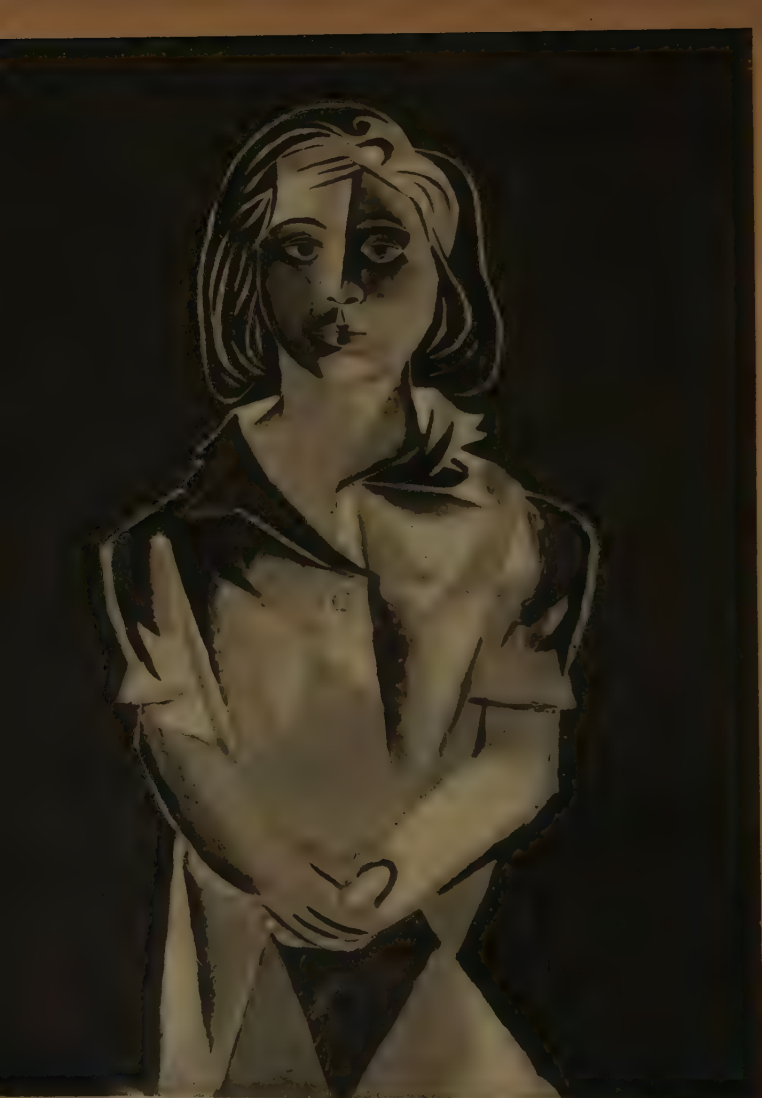


LUCIAN FREUD

Lemons



London Gallery



London Gallery

JOHN CRAXTON

Portrait of a Small Girl



London Gallery

Hotel by the Sea

Greek Farm

London Gallery





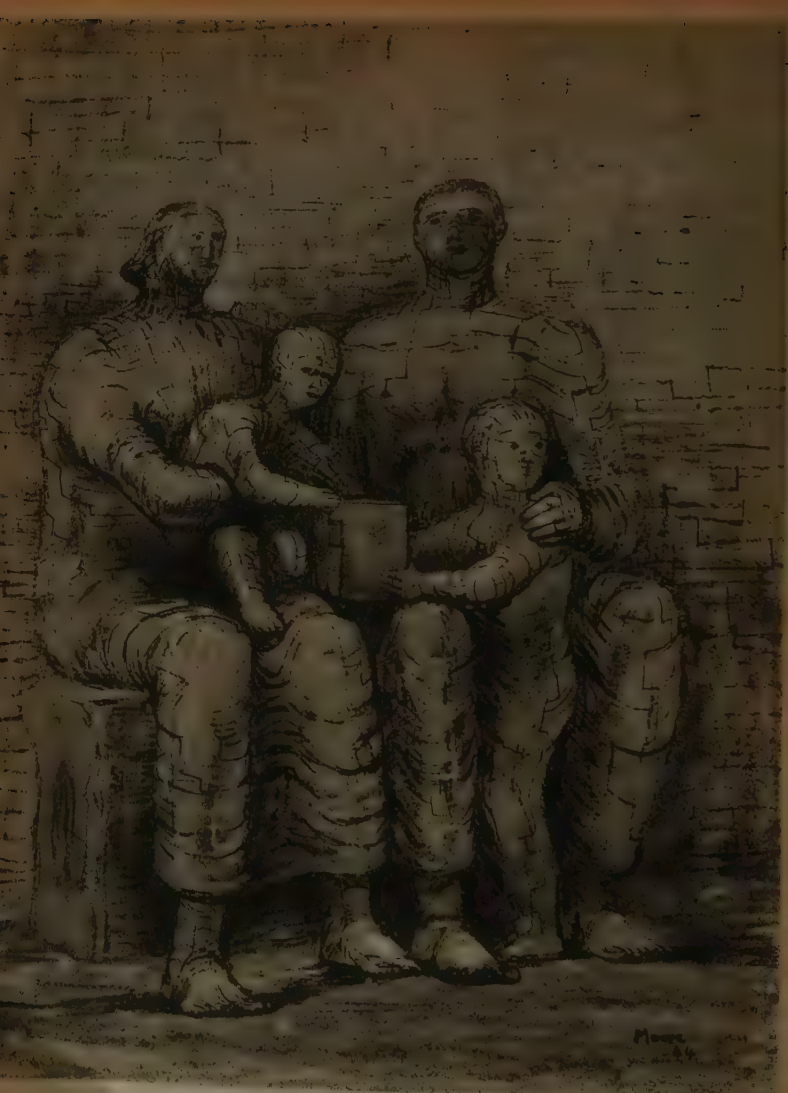
SAINT-SAËNS : Diana



LURÇAT: Roofs

ROBERT: The Farmyard

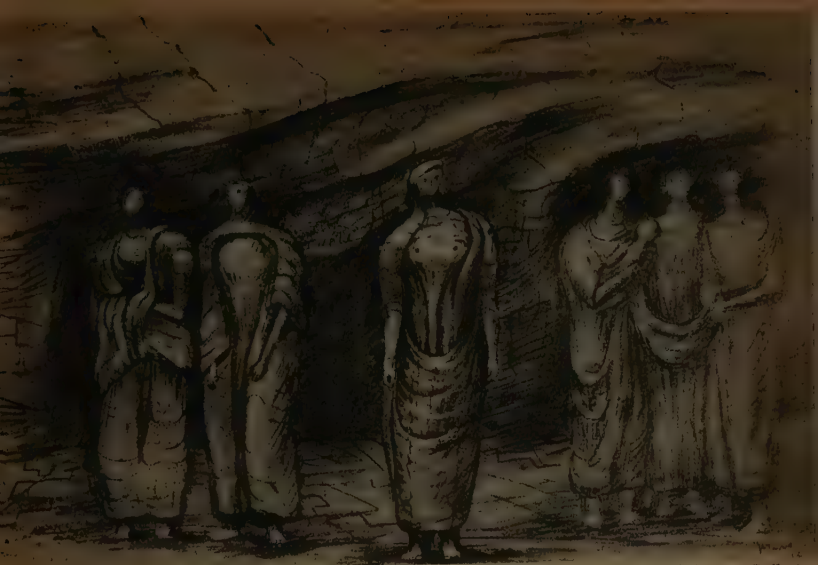




Leicester Galleries

HENRY MOORE

Study for Sculpture

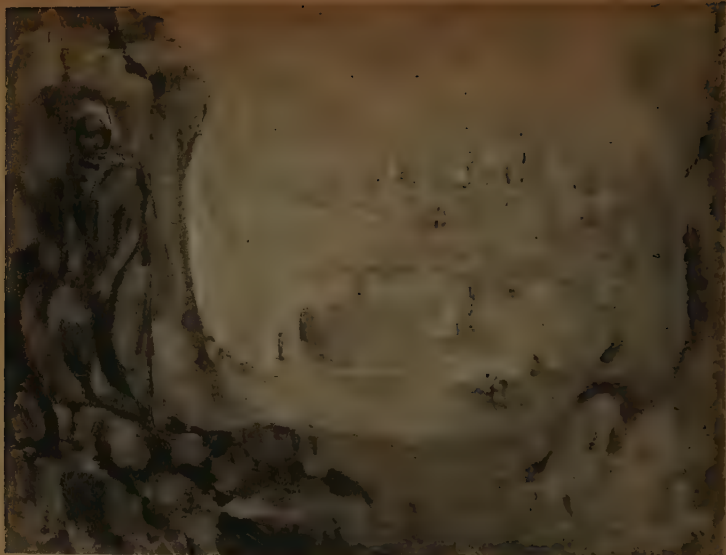


Leicester Galleries

HENRY MOORE: Two Studies

Leicester Galleries





Leicester Galleries

Tomb of the Khedives

ROBERT MEDLEY

Rejection of the Minotaur





McBean

TWELFTH NIGHT AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON



McBean

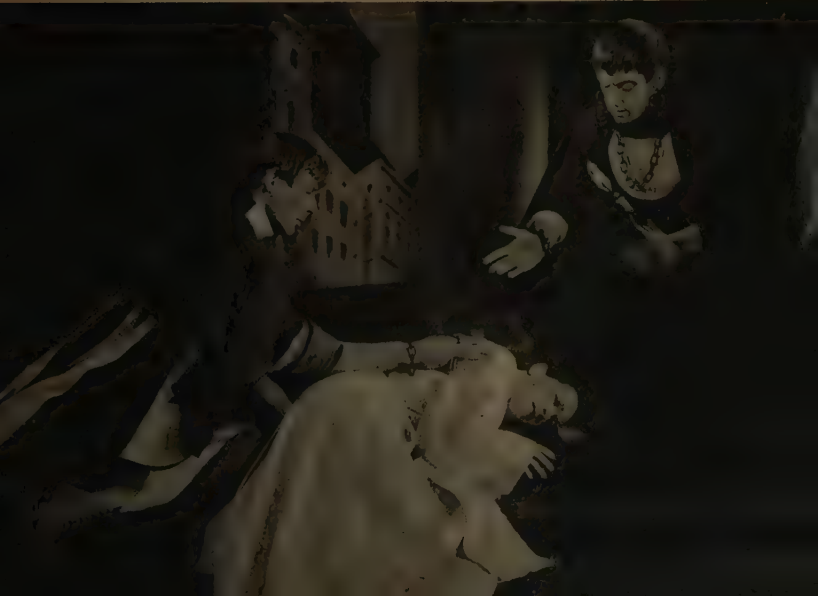
THE WHITE DEVIL

Production by Michael Benthall



McBean

THE WHITE DEVIL
Production by Michael Benthall





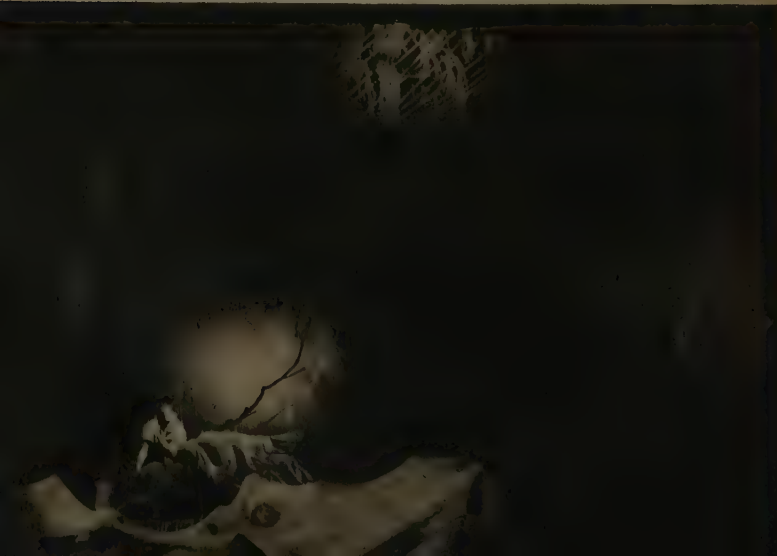
Heinrich

Jiri Mucha: The Golden Age

THEATRE IN PRAGUE

E. F. Burian: Love, Defiance and Death

Drbohlav





HOELDERLIN'S DEATH OF EMPEDOCLES

At the Schauspielhaus, Zürich

Zimmermann.





BALLETS DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Le Jeune Homme et la Mort (Jean Cocteau)

her purity is called in question. He is sheepish and frightened when he breaks it to her that she is to have a new Mamma. In fact, though the language, the conventions of paternal and filial behaviour are those of a dead day, the psychological implications ring timelessly true. The weakness in the portrait of Dr. Gibson—that which prevents it from being absolutely first-class—is Mrs. Gaskell's refusal or failure to look at him steadily in his sexual aspect. She is not, one must repeat, 'flustered' by him: she makes no bones about presenting the obvious sexual fascination of his appearance, and she invests him with a hint of romantic mystery: his dead wife was not, we are told, his first love, nor his second; no, nor his third. But when it comes to his second marriage, Mrs. Gaskell sets her face against romance, and proceeds on the assumption that virile widowers of forty-two are beyond passion. The result is that Dr. Gibson in his role of suitor forfeits something of our respect without gaining our sympathy. That he should have succumbed to Mrs. Kirkpatrick can only be made plausible by a hint, at least, that desire has overturned his judgment. But no. There on the other hand stands the ridiculous lovely caressing widow, on the other Dr. Gibson, averting his eye from her charms to fix it coolly on considerations of her suitability as regards age and social connections. We do not quarrel with Mrs. Gaskell for keeping the disastrous marriage on the plane of comedy—her kind of comedy at its best goes deep into the human heart; but there is a sense of something dense, limp, stuffy and decorous, like a feather bolster, interposed between the reader and Dr. Gibson in his bridegroom aspect. Not until the admirable chapter called 'The Mother's Manœuvre,' when he sees straight, speaks straight and is finally disillusioned, does he recover his stature.

Squire Hamley, shrewd, childish, violent, generous, the Earl of Cumnor, gossiping, amiable, silly, are admirably drawn characters on a minor scale, but of course, when

all is said and done, *Wives and Daughters* will live by virtue of its three major female portraits, Molly Gibson, Cynthia Kirkpatrick, Mrs. Kirkpatrick.

Molly is a typical Victorian heroine. She has affinities with George Eliot's girls, and with such a character as Trollope's Lily Dale. She is nobly planned, if not to command, certainly to guide and comfort. She is submissive to her father, and will be equally so to her husband. At the same time, she has a mind of her own, and great moral courage. After the Victorian model, she stifles rebellious thoughts and wishes, chides herself for any manifestation of will or temper. Prepared for total self-immolation, she suffers injustice, pines in scrupulous silence for the sake of loved ones. Such a catalogue of virtues gives an impression of null perfection, but in fact she is fresh, human, clearly individualized; not exactly interesting but not at all insipid. Girls to-day must still feel sisterly towards her as she looks at herself in the mirror: 'I don't think I am pretty,' thought Molly, as she turned away from the glass, 'and yet I am not sure . . .' She is a dear, a sweet girl, whose strength of character we admire, but we do not tremendously long to know her; and even if we did, we could not. She sleeps in her Victorian tomb, flower-planted; we linger to read her touching epitaph, and wish her back; but she cannot come again. It is partly the Women's Revolution, partly the Freudian revolution with its consequent profound alteration in the position of the younger *vis à vis* the parent generation: she could not breathe a moment in a state of society where elders are no longer betters; where so far from being praised for filial merit, she would be roundly condemned by her contemporaries, not to speak of her psychiatrist, for her weak submission to shocking exploitation by father, stepmother, stepsister and elderly neighbours. One can hear the deafening chorus: 'emotional blackmail,' 'infantilism,' 'atavism,' 'father-fixation'; and poor Molly going down defenceless, drowned, beneath it.

But when we come to Cynthia, we are in another world, a world we visit only with the greatest novelists. Here is her portrait as she was: a bewitching Victorian girl decked in all the fresh, the wanton allurements of muslins, ribbons, flowers; belle of the ball, flirt, tease, heartless syren . . . and her frame cannot contain her: she steps out of it, and 'moving with the free stately step of some wild animal of the forest,' she walks about our imaginations like a creature seen, loved—to be seen, to be loved—long ago—soon, round the next corner. Mrs. Gaskell never drew any other character like Cynthia. Indeed, one may scan the length and breadth of Victorian fiction and find nothing to compare with her: one wonders from what depth of experience or self-knowledge her creator begot and nourished her. She bears the hall-mark of the great portraits of fiction—that perfect consistency in inconsistency by virtue of which a character is both intensely individualized and seen under an eternal aspect. She is unscrupulous, but not, like Rosamond Vincy, cold and calculating; a flirt, but not, like Beatrix Esmond, frivolous and cruel. Her 'exquisite power of adaptation to varying people and still more various moods' is a half-unconscious power; she is aware of it, exercises it dangerously yet with innocence. She is capable of a 'great jerk and effort' of virtue, but must, as she says, relax after the effort. She is worldly yet simple in her tastes, cynical but swiftly responsive to moral goodness; incapable of deep love yet warm, generous and disinterested in some of her affections; a prevaricator, yet truthful; unprincipled and secretive, yet unusually honest and self-critical. She despises and condemns her mother, but at the same time is in a great measure loyal and dutiful towards her. Perhaps what we love most about her is her irony, her wit; and then her careless exquisite way with clothes, her songs, so faulty in technique, so ravishing in sweetness. As the bride of a handsome rich young barrister, she fades out of the story. We are meant to assume that like all Victorian brides she is 'settled';

we do assume that she will enslave and disquiet her husband, have adoring children, steer her course just clear of scandal, and float in glamour, pleasure and good fortune to a sunny old age.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick—Mrs. Gibson—is Mrs. Gaskell's other masterpiece. It is difficult to resist the conviction that she was derived from memories of the detested stepmother of her own youth. In any case, she is one of the most devastating portraits of a stupid vulgar destructive woman ever drawn this side of wickedness. For though she is so ignoble she is not a bad woman. She married her first husband for love and has as much affection for her second, and for Molly, as her flabby nature permits. When her nauseating matrimonial calculations in the matter of Cynthia and the two Hamley sons are exposed and she is brought to bay, she does not fight back: she dissolves in weak shame and tearful self-justification. For the rest of her life she will endeavour to win back her husband's esteem. She will endure his barbed tongue, his neglect, with obtuse bewildered patience, and try to placate him with his favourite pudding. And this though infuriating is also pathetic. Her vices are querulousness, vanity, self-pity, sentimentality and all the base falsities of snobbishness: nothing on the tragic scale. And though Mrs. Gaskell castigates her falseness and her folly, her view is not entirely harsh; the bitter necessary stratagems of poverty, the humiliating shifts of dependence are brought before us with the suggestion that they must excuse a great deal. Besides, we are enriched with such delicious passages of comedy at her expense that we almost like the fatuous creature for giving us such a laugh. Her affectations, for instance, her ludicrous vanity as she stands at the window blowing Roger a volley of kisses unable to conceive that Roger's romantic farewell gesture is meant for Molly. Her sententious truisms:

'I consider the thought as everything,' said Mrs. Gibson.
'Thought is spiritual, while action is merely material.'

'The future is hidden from us by infinite wisdom, Molly, or else I should like to know it; one would calculate one's behaviour so much better at the present time if one knew what events were to come.'

It is on a passage of her characteristically ludicrous, petulant babble that the book breaks off. Tucked up by Molly, she falls asleep 'to dream about my dear Cynthia and my new shawl.' This written, Mrs. Gaskell put down her pen. A few hours later, her life had ended.

Frederick Greenwood, the then editor of *The Cornhill*, added to the last chapter a pious supplementary note, reprinted in the Knutsford edition of *Wives and Daughters*, and we have no difficulty in agreeing with his conjectures and conclusions. Even without them, we should know that Molly's tribulations are almost at an end. Roger will come back, more manly, more distinguished than ever; they will marry and live happily ever after. The only questions that remain are minor ones: how long and through what further trials and scruples the lovers' suspense is to endure. Mrs. Gaskell felt, herself, that the novel was getting too long. There are, perhaps, passages towards the latter part which suggest fatigue; and perhaps, from the technical standpoint, it is too long. But for those who love the book to say this is an irrelevance: almost as if to say that a loved face has developed a wrinkle or so and is therefore less dear. The only regret we can properly feel is a personal one. We must be grieved to think that death, with futile irony, should have cheated one whose whole life was order, harmony, accomplishment; should have signed her greatest task: *The End. Unfinished.*

V. S. PRITCHETT

THE FUTURE OF FICTION

After their long silence it is natural to wonder what is going on in the minds of the English novelists. Has another Proust, cunningly insulated from total war, been secretly writing all the time? There was said to be a crisis in the condition of the novel: in the eight paralysed years since Munich has that crisis been surmounted in the course of idleness by unconscious cerebration? Was the war our psycho-analyst upon whom we successfully transferred the novel's neurosis? Or do we take up the pen again to be faced by the old difficulty? What we have meant to convey during the last twenty-five years by the words 'the future of the novel,' was our doubt whether the novel had any future at all; a doubt that first arose when *Ulysses* looked like the novel to end all novels, when the first long narrative films succeeded and the monopoly of the novel came to an end; but above all when our most talented novelists retired into the private gardens of their sensibility and left the world outside to their inferiors. Since *Sons and Lovers* and *A Passage to India*, have there been any English novels of the highest rank? A quarter of a century has passed since these two books were written.

It is doubtful whether a novelist is the best investigator of these questions. For him 'the novel' is the novels he has not written; and a guess at the future of the novel will mean for him, the novels he thinks someone else ought to write: *he* intends otherwise. The views of a novelist are hardly more than the steam rising from a simmering pot. Or more precisely, they are arguments with his own conscience and imagination, clues to his own conflicts. Very well he knows that themes, tendencies, methods cannot be imposed. Very doubtfully may they even be self-imposed; any novel

he may write rises from the contention within. If he asks for a less esoteric sensibility and for a range altogether wider in the novel, it is because he is dissatisfied with himself and is not equipped to be very much more. The novelist is what he is.

Still, certain things are obvious.

Talent abounds; the highest talent. If we take any half dozen distinguished novelists under fifty we must admire their feeling, their brains, their writing, their diverse and original skills. They know how to write. They never exceed their knowledge. They make no gross errors. For them the novel is an art and they practise it with fidelity. How rarely one is bored by the best modern novels; how often, in the past, have 'the great' bored us, how awkwardly distended by errors they have been. If only, we say, we could combine all the skill of the modern novelist in one outstanding imagination, if only we could roll any half dozen of our novelists into one. If only—and there lies the undefined mystery of our dissatisfaction. It may be that these distinguished novelists are much more than distinguished; perhaps they, and all contemporary literature, are hopelessly overshadowed by the events of the last ten years. Life may not only have afflicted the creative with its excesses; life may have dulled the ear of criticism also.

If this is not so we can fall back upon the now hackneyed explanations of the lack of 'great novels'; the breakdown of our civilization; the enfeeblement of upper middle class culture; the fact that two wars have robbed two generations of their maturity; the fact that life has behaved exorbitantly. Every writer (I believe Mr. Desmond MacCarthy once said), has to decide the amount of life he will live: it is possible for writers to live too much; and, in one sense, the compressed concentration on skill, intelligence and sensibility suggests the unmanageable pressure of public life upon the writer's mind which, to some extent, must always run counter to the open direction of the world. Our half dozen writers stand on the dwindling ground of private life.

There is also a not unimportant mechanical consideration. An uncontrollable amount of visual and oral experience is despatched by screen and radio directly to the audience without ceremony, experience which was once the monopoly of the novelist; and he finds himself in a position similar to the painters' when photography was invented. Here the dilemma of the novelist is painful; he is on the flood-tide of a popular movement, a class revolution which offers new subjects and even new language; one which may conceivably heal the split in our culture. But he finds that the cinema and the radio sweep away his advantage the moment he attains it. This is an age of the senses, not of the mind; an age made for the reporter, not for the imagination.

The novelist is also bound to reflect in dismay that the modern novel is only two hundred years old. It is the youngest literary form, far younger, for example, than the drama. The novel was born with modern capitalism, it is saturated with individualism and liberal culture; it is characteristically middle class. Is the novel tied to the fate of capitalism and the liberal view of life? Is the novel condemned quietly to become an anomaly in the socialist climate where freedom, individualism, liberal thought and the preoccupation with individual fate are despised, discouraged or, worse still, are painlessly forgotten? When we think of the future of the novel, we are enquiring whether it is the form which will continue to attract the best creative minds; and it may be that the intellectual atmosphere of the collective state will be kinder to other forms of writing. Under socialism, the sociable art may wane; just as, since the flowering of sociability, epics like *Paradise Lost*, compendious narratives like *The Canterbury Tales* and sagas like *Beowulf*, are no longer written. Official myths may come to mean more to us than private histories, and this condition—as Greek literature shows us—is above all congenial to the drama. It may very well be that 'official' art—in this sense—will be superior to the private or unofficial art of the novelist, and already the cinema has shown

the capacity—crude though it is—to create myths and ‘heroes of our time’—a capacity which the novel has lost. When we say there are too many novels we mean that so many different views of life become in the end gratuitous and self-destructive; and we would like to return to a form of art which, working under more stimulating restrictions, would speak with the single voice of a classical authority.

Still, though we allow our pessimism to make this kind of bed, we novelists are not obliged to lie on it. After all the novel *is* a young form and its strength lies in its adaptability. Private life dwindles: for long, ever since D. H. Lawrence, indeed ever since Wells’s *The New Machiavelli*, the interest in character for its own sake has gone. Lives, states of mind, states of soul, collective feeling have replaced the concern with the friction of character in its own circle. Sensibility itself has dissolved character of the traditional kind. The people in Miss Compton Burnett’s novels move like the featureless hierophants of some tortuous ceremony. The chief character is no longer the hero, the heroine or the villain but, in a large number of novels, is really an impersonal shadow, a presence that we may call ‘the contemporary situation.’ Without knowing it, often by responding with his private sensibility only, the novelist has slipped into the role of unofficial historian. He has become the historian of the crisis in civilization, whether he writes politically (as Koestler has done), as a religious man like Graham Greene or with the obliquity of those dispossessed poets, Henry Green and Miss Elizabeth Bowen. This strange new personage has taken possession of the novel as a mist takes possession of the streets and all who breathe it are transformed and, I think, are also diminished. When we regret that there are no ‘great characters’ in the modern novel, people like Squire Western, Lovelace, Micawber, Sir Willoughby Patterne or Lord Jim, the reply must be that ‘the contemporary situation’ has brought them all to a single level.

In making this judgment, we must record the losses of

the novel, but we need not go deeply into them. From the point of life, range has been lost; from the point of religion or ethics, spiritual and moral conflict have been lost—we analyse and endure, we do not choose and act—from the point of view of morals or politics, purpose has been lost. We sum up the case against ourselves by saying that the novel has become a diversified autobiography. The 'I', whether he is the reporter, the camera man, the sensibility, the split self of our time, dominates these books. The 'they' of the Victorians—even the 'they' of Wells, Bennett, Conrad and the Lawrence of the mining stories, has receded. Nor need we go far into the gains: the elision of false scenery, explanatory essays, useless sub-plots, tendentious and literary dialogue, and the great gain in narrative and psychological alacrity. Loss of substance, gain of means, must still (I think) be the general judgment on the condition of the contemporary novel. The war-time novels have followed Hemingway-ese—the false tough or fake poker-faced—to the point of self parody. They roneo Isherwood also.

The heart of the problem for the modern novelist is that he has had a glut of new means, new manners, new styles; he has been poor in material or passive in his use of it. He looks no subject full in the face and he has accordingly been distracted by the outskirts of it. To his enormous credit the modern English novelist—writers like Isherwood, Elizabeth Bowen and Graham Greene—have conserved the human fragments in an iron age when human lives, what I feel and you feel, are considered to be shameful. Human beings are simply archaic, ivy-covered ruins, preserved by the connoisseur, and they stand out oddly in the new world of the masses. They are seen in a twilight.

And yet, under the new dispensation, is it true? *Are* human beings in fact so isolated, so free of responsibility, so passive before fate? Is their environment merely the dwindling ground they stand on? Obviously not. Before the war the young novelist's stock remedy was Marxism and

social realism. We were due for a working-class novel, a political novel, a novel reconstituted by renewed contact with society. It must be said that Marxism has inspired no novels of the first class—at a guess, I would say, Marxism is more likely to inspire drama—nor have there even been any English novels about social justice or economic conditions, or even novels of plain reporting, which arouse much interest. The decadent bourgeois formalist with his passion for psychology has had all the talent. Realism—ideological and literary—has been hardly more than pedestrian. I take it that Marxist theory was too black and white for the English scene. Marxism and social realism have certainly produced no novels of the first order in Russia either; and, to be just, one is not sure whether this is due to the lack of amenity and excess of dynamic in the doctrine or a lack of freedom and security in which to consider it. The valuable work of Marxism has been in literary criticism where it has traced literature back to one of its sources in social life; and perhaps, if Marxism could be disentangled from the miserable manœuvres of party politics, and be prevented from the cheerless habit of hanging itself in the loops of the party line it might inspire the novelist. But one must doubt whether straight doctrine of any kind ever moved the imagination, which indeed thrives rather on mixtures. *Paradise Lost* was not written by a straight Cromwellian Puritan. The real political subject of the last fifteen years has not been the clash of beliefs, but the vacillations and disillusiones accompanying the wish to believe.

Another remedy offered to the novelist was the return to the Christian tradition, the revival of the frame of original sin, the beauties of irrationalism; or a return to 'values,' though the conditions which produced them, the condition of stability above all, are lacking. And it must be said that the brilliant school of Catholic pessimists and converts has brought new material to the novel. The soul—one of the repressed subjects of a rational period—has the attraction

of the repressed. Original sin has replaced sex as the exquisitely forbidden fruit; and the pleasure of showing how good are the souls of bad men has been exploited with brilliance. In their badness lies the soil of faith: a bad Catholic is better than a good non-Catholic. The Catholic novelist has the great advantage of writing against the current of his time.

But against them must be put the fact that the Catholics are all converts; they write with Protestant zeal and the Calvinist zest for damnation. Like the Marxists, they are totalitarians and totalitarians do not value individual human life. Not for long. Never when we come to the precise test. Like the Marxists, like the sceptics of our generation, they are specialists. There is no conflict. There is the medicinal application of doctrine to life. The result is that although the religious approach has added new material to the novel, new material that is handled with all the advantage of the long, flexible western tradition of Catholic culture, it is still specialized. The range is still narrow. Life has gone into hospital: the smell of ether, the smell of the surgery, the un pitying point of the surgeon's knife, are suggested by these brilliant misanthropists, who would persuade us that we all urgently need an operation.

In their general terms, these two movements, the religious and the political, have done a service to the novelist. They have reawakened his interest in ordinary people, they have interested him in the present melting of classes—in which a new class, the upper-working or lower middle-class are coming to power, as interestingly as Balzac's manufacturers—they are restoring the sense of environment. But they touch only the fringe of their two subjects, the side to which their doctrine exclusively directs them. Money and religion: yes, those are the two repressed subjects in the modern novel upon which furtively we open the door, two matters so closely entwined in human life that in observing the lives of ordinary people we can never escape them. Not only that: their aspect changes in every generation, as

certainly as the fashion of love. How far we have moved, under the still continued influence of the Romantic movement, from the eighteenth century's preoccupation with self-interest, so despised by the sensibility, and yet ubiquitous. So persistent that who can doubt in a vulgar society such as ours, a society of the common people, that it has the interest of a major passion. There exists at present a kind of mystique of the plain, the ordinary, of all that we mean by the sound, human feeling of 'the people'; it is dangerous and insensitive to fail to observe the other side of this mystique. The movement dominated by the word 'people' has a strong Puritan derivation: the inseparable companion, the unholy whisper at its elbow, is the picaro or rogue.

The failure to write about money, in our generation, has its roots, I believe, in the reaction against the Protestant outlook on life, for Protestantism is not totalitarian. Its vitality has lain in its readiness to break up into new forms; and, in England, its spirit has, paradoxically, done much to create 'the people' movement. Condemned by its intimate association with individualism and capitalism, its hatred of the medieval outlook, its repugnance to anonymity, the Protestant attitude has enormously in its favour the belief in the necessity of virtue and good conduct. There is no salvation through sin. There is salvation only in virtue and restraint. The Protestant lives on earth. This religious attitude is now profoundly part of English character; and in ignoring the consequences of it, the novelist ignores important elements in psychology, for religion intones the fundamental human responses. One example may be taken from a Victorian novel, simply to show what the modern novelist has totally neglected: I mean the quite common wish to be good. In psychological terms one would say that the novelist has ostracized the super-ego. The example comes from *Felix Holt* and George Eliot was the novelist of the super-ego above all. Here one sees the mischievous and agreeable Esther Lyon sitting beside the harsh and doctrinaire young Radical at one of his meetings—meetings

so topical and disturbing to mid-Victorians, so boring, it must be confessed, to us—and, at the sight of his handsome face, she is perturbed, not by the so improbably direct sexual desires our contemporaries immediately imagine; but by the longing 'to be better.' We need not suppose that longing takes this precise form nowadays when a nice girl sits next to a handsome one-track communist, or any other young man with an overmastering idea in his head, but the idea of self-elevation is a permanently recurring episode in love, and is fertile in social consequences. In our own time, so far have we removed from the close observation of environment, we are inclined to take too primitive a view of human conduct and society. The truth is that the primitive and the civilized have settled down to living side by side.

I am not suggesting a crop of pious novels. I am suggesting that what in its broadest sense can be called the Protestant environment, has been neglected by the satirical and the serious. For the novelist, the mad religions are as fruitful as the serious ones. I am suggesting a world with which the novelist can do as he likes. A second suggestion grows out of this: it has already stimulated some of the work of Rex Warner, though he has not infused his subjects with the juice of human life. There might well be a return to the unromantic, unpicturesque rendering of the great characters who are really great moral types: to the hypocrite, the miser, the envious man, the tyrant, the sycophant, the sadist, the virtuous man, the lazy man. Ben Jonson, Bunyan, Molière and (half-way towards ourselves) Balzac show the way. Above all, the moralized figures of the Russian novel, characters like Prince Myshkin, the superb Iudushka of *The Golovlyov Family*, or the sublime Oblomov. The novelist who is imbued with the idea of the virtue and imagination of 'the people,' ought to seek to create myths which the cinema has—so crudely—already succeeded in creating, without benefit of moral reflection; in these moral types, whom all recognize, upon whom all brood, he might find matter which is not repugnant to the intellect and

which is delightful to the general imagination. They are the necessary demi-gods, the humanized ideas, which a new humanism will have to create if it is to survive æsthetically. Our world is not likely to be satisfied for much longer with the picaresque novel, which has become popular in the present period of chaos. If our world survives at all, the craving for these moral figures, these moralities, will impose itself, I believe, upon the novelist. The experience of war, whatever else it is on the surface, has deposited in millions of men deprived of any other intellectual resource, a simple rudimentary moral interest in the types among whom they have lived. For man is sustained by the sight of his fellows and, in these years, has often been sustained by nothing else.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

JOHN CLARE AND THE PEASANT TRADITION

There is in English poetry, as in that of all other nations, a tradition of the folk, which lies behind and is always influencing the great literary tradition. It manifests itself in May-day carol and harvest-song, in children's rhymes and dance-games, in ballads, humorous or moralizing—which often find their way into printed broad-sheets—in certain hymns and spontaneous expressions of piety, and, lastly, when the craft of the village stone-mason was still a living tradition, in the rhymed epitaph. This folk-poetry has its roots in the old-fashioned village community, with its traditional occupations, and its seasonal rhythm of occasional holidays and festivals. Many of the songs are designed primarily to accompany and facilitate labour. They are thus bound up with the cottage crafts and industries. In such a community, the sedentary occupations, such as spinning, are primarily the province of women, and that is why, in genuine folk-song, the burden of the emotion so often lies upon the heroine, who is commonly the speaker in the love-songs and in many ballads. This pattern of life, the agrarian revolution, with its enclosure system, which enriched the well-to-do farmers and landlords, while it deprived the smaller peasants of the common lands on which their livelihood largely depended, destroyed. At the same time, the industrial revolution brought to an end the traditional cottage industries. All through the nineteenth century the traditional way of life in the English village was a thing dying or already dead. At the beginning of that era, collectors began to take notice of the words of folk-songs; the music was to be recovered later, as a result of the labours of Cecil Sharp and others. It was almost too late.

We must not suppose this song-making of the village to be a tradition altogether unlearned or anonymous. In the moral carols and ballads, in particular, we sometimes note the hand of the curate or the village schoolmaster. In the village community of the earlier centuries, it was often their education alone, not their income or fundamental way of life, which differentiated such men from most of their neighbours. Besides the professional ballad-singer, adapting for his songs formulas and plots inherited from the medieval minstrel, there were also poets among the people themselves who made songs from their own experience, or out of some local jest or tradition. The beautiful song called 'The Seeds of Love,' one of the more widely current of English folk-songs, is stated in Bells's *Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England* (1862), to have been the composition of a Mrs. Fleetwood Habbergham, a Lancaster woman who died in 1703. It is her lament for her unhappy marriage, and is interesting as showing how the singer quite naturally made use of a conventional symbolism to figure her emotions:

I sowed the seeds of love, it was all in the Spring
 In April, May, and June, likewise, when small birds they
 do sing;
 My garden's well planted with flowers everywhere,
 Yet I had not the liberty to choose for myself the flower that
 I loved so dear.

My gardener he stood by, I asked him to choose for me,
 He chose me the violet, the lily and pink, and those I refused
 all three;
 The violet I forsook, because it fades so soon,
 The lily and the pink I did o'erlook, and I vowed I'd stay
 till June.

In June there's a red rose-bud, and that's the flower for me!
 But often have I plucked at the red rose-bud till I gained the
 willow-tree;

The willow-tree will twist, and the willow-tree will twine—
O! I wish I was in the dear youth's arms that once had the
heart of mine.

My gardener he stood by, he told me to take great care,
For in the middle of a red rose-bud there grows a sharp
thorn there;
I told him I'd take no care till I did feel the smart,
And often I plucked at the red rose-bud till I pierced it to
the heart.

I'll make me a posy of hyssop—no other I can touch—
That all the world may plainly see I love one flower too
much;

My garden is run wild! where shall I plant anew—
For my bed, that once was covered with thyme, is all over-
run with rue.

There is an interchange between the world of folk-song and the literary world of the town. A glance at any collection of broad-sheets will reveal, along with ballads which obviously go back, in some cases, to originals as early as the sixteenth century, songs by such writers as Burns, Moore and 'Monk' Lewis, as well as snatches from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century glees and ballad operas. By such channels this literary material gained an oral currency, even among the illiterate. It was absorbed, as it were, into the stream of folk-tradition, and was often curiously modified in the process. In one of the English mumming plays edited by Professor Chambers, such as were still performed by a troupe of village mummers down to the present century, St. George and his companions burst into a song, which proves, on investigation, to be a garbled version of an aria from Addison's extremely artificial and italianate opera *Rosamund*.

These country songs, falling upon our ears to-day, call forth feelings of nostalgia. The world in which they had their birth is gone, and can never return. Yet, as long as it existed, it offered a way of life in which values were still

fixed, and modes of thought and feeling had behind them the backing of historical continuity. And amid the intellectual and moral confusion of the nineteenth century, there were certain poets who, by birth or by occupation, stood close to this tradition, and whose technique is, to a large extent, a development of that which they inherited from their peasant neighbours and forefathers. In the early part of the century, we have not only Clare, who sprang directly from the peasant class, but also William Barnes and Robert Stephen Hawker, village priests from West country parishes, who participated sufficiently closely in the life of the communities of farmers and labourers among whom they lived, for their poetical work to have, for all their scholarship and relative sophistication, something of the essential qualities of the folk art. In a later generation the same tradition is continued, though with a more self-conscious and intellectual attitude, in the verse of Thomas Hardy. The work of these poets, it seems to me, preserves an integrity, and gives an impression of soundness, scarcely to be found in that of their more polite contemporaries.

John Clare is the only notable English (as distinct from Scottish) poet to have sprung directly from the ranks of the agricultural workers. (Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd,' must be classed as a Scottish poet, though he was actually born a little south of the Border.) Moreover, it must be remembered that Clare himself, for considerable periods of his life, worked on the land. There is a peculiar poignancy in the story of this Northamptonshire villager, whose genius was discovered by well-meaning literary patrons; who was unable, afterwards, either to fit contentedly again into the world of the peasantry from which he had been taken, or to find a secure position in any other sphere; of his confinement as a madman, and his death, so many years afterwards, solitary and forgotten, in that condition. It might indeed have been expected. Things of the same sort had happened before. There had been, as long ago

as the time of George II and his Queen Caroline, the unfortunate Stephen Duck, by origin a day-labourer, who received the patronage of the Queen, but also died mad. There had been, a few years before Clare's time, Robert Bloomfield, another ill-starred poet, whose *The Farmer's Boy* nevertheless achieved a popularity which continued even when Clare's infinitely superior poems were ignored. Bloomfield's talents were but slight, and seem quickly to have been smothered under the eighteenth-century literary manner which he acquired, and which he practised after a competent, but somewhat featureless fashion. The unlucky history of Burns, a more vigorous, though not perhaps a more inspired poet than Clare, comes to mind likewise. Yet the strange fate of Clare's poetry, the indifferent attitude taken up by even those critics who knew it, for generations after his death, is hard to explain. Only in this century have critics and scholars (above all Mr. Edmund Blunden and J. W. and A. Tibble) really begun to realize its merits, and bring them before the generality of readers. Yet Clare must be treated as occupying a peculiar, though not necessarily a minor place in the hierarchy of the Romantic poets; no longer merely as a curiosity.

John Clare was born in 1793 at Helpston, a village near Peterborough. His father, Parker Clare, was the illegitimate son of John Donald Parker, a Scotsman, who had been the village schoolmaster. His mother was illiterate, but it is recorded that his father, who had an exceptional memory, had a stock of more than a hundred ballads which he could repeat by heart. Clare is also said to have learned a number of such songs from an old woman, called Granny Bains, who lived in his native village.

Clare was sent to a village dame's school, and later, between the ages of seven and twelve, attended a day school at Glinton. In order to obtain the money which made this possible, he helped his father with threshing and other work. The books which Clare read in his early boyhood give a fair idea of the kind of literary culture which was

current amongst the peasantry, and which fertilized, so to speak, the folk tradition. Besides the Bible and Prayer Book, they included *Robinson Crusoe*, and a number of sixpenny chap-book romances and penny broad-sheet ballads, such as were brought to the village and to local fairs by pedlars and hawkers. Among these penny ballads was Wordsworth's 'We are Seven'—this fact is a good illustration of the interchange between literary and folk-culture of which I have spoken. He was also, from an early age, familiar with the story of Chatterton, because it formed the subject of a series of woodcuts printed on a handkerchief—obviously originally part of the stock of a pedlar at some local fair. When Clare's father became crippled by rheumatism, Clare began working for neighbouring farmers in order to support him, at the same time attending at a night school at Glinton.

He had already begun to show himself of more than usual intelligence, and of a somewhat abnormal nervous sensibility. He began to be taken with 'fits' every spring and autumn—and one cannot help suspecting that these were an indication of some kind of mental disorder, of a cyclic nature, the root of his later insanity. Clare himself attributed their occurrence to the shock induced by seeing a man break his neck by accidentally falling from a wagon. 'The ghastly paleness of death,' he wrote later of this incident, 'struck such a terror on me that I could not forget it for years, and my dreams were constantly wandering in churchyards, digging graves, seeing spirits in charnel-houses, etc.'

The reading of Thomson's *Seasons* first encouraged Clare to try his hand at verse-making. He was at first too shy to acknowledge his poems as his own, but the praise which they received from friends encouraged him to continue. Soon, too, he fell in love with Mary Joyce, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. Clare had no prospects, and the girl's father would not allow them to marry. Clare saw her for the last time in 1816, but this passionate, fruitless

love was never to be forgotten—even after his marriage to Martha Tenner ('Patty') in 1820. To Clare, Mary Joyce was his 'first wife' and later, in his madness, her figure was to reappear in his poetry, to the exclusion of that of Patty. Nor did he fail to note the symbolism of the two names, Mary and Martha—the ideal and the workaday reality.

Helpston had been largely farmed under the old open-field system, but in 1809 an Act was passed enclosing lands there. This, which was for the benefit of the landlords and the richer farmers, was disastrous for the labourers, who thereby lost their strips of land, and the chance of keeping a cow of their own. It was in the atmosphere of the disruption of the old community life, with a consequent loosening of morals and a decline in self-respect among individuals, that Clare grew up. Settled employment was not always easy to get. Clare worked as apprentice to a gardener on the Marquis of Exeter's estate for a short time, and during the Napoleonic wars served in the militia. From 1814 to 1817 he did gardening and other casual work on the land. At the same time he continued to read in the English poets, gradually acquiring a library of his own, and to write prolifically. By a fortunate series of chances his poems were brought to the knowledge of John Taylor, Keats's publisher, who undertook to issue a volume of Clare's work. This book appeared in 1820, and was immediately a success. It received favourable reviews in the London Press, and Clare gained some friends and patrons both among the local gentry and in London. He made several visits to the capital, where he met some of the literary figures of the day, including Lamb and Hood. Another of his acquaintances was George Darley, with whom he corresponded, and whose example he followed in writing verses in imitation of the English seventeenth-century poets. Efforts were made to help Clare financially on the part of various patrons. A subscription list was opened for him, which provided him with a fixed income of a little more

than forty pounds a year. This was about ten pounds more than he could have earned as a labourer, but he had his parents and a large family to support. Casual work on the land, with which he might have augmented his resources, was not, except during harvest-time, easy to get. Clare's patrons were willing to accept him as a 'peasant poet'—something of an elegant curiosity. That he should be helped sufficiently to allow him to live as a professional writer in London was unthinkable. Some of them, too, were disturbed by the 'ungrateful' radical sentiments which he occasionally expressed. Clare's income was paid through Taylor, the publisher, who was, however, extremely unbusinesslike and dilatory in his methods. Accounts were very badly kept, and when in 1825 Taylor's firm was dissolved, Clare found himself unexpectedly burdened with debt. For the next ten years, in spite of occasional assistance from patrons, Clare's financial worries continued. Neither of his two later volumes of verse achieved the success of his first. Though they received favourable notice from the critics, the public would not buy them. Too long an interval was allowed to elapse between their appearance, so that Clare's name was not kept before the public. Partly for economic reasons, the slump in poetry, which also affected Beddoes, Darley and Hood, was operating here also. Clare became increasingly nervous and ill. He seems to have suffered some delusions of persecution, and believed himself to be the victim of witchcraft. His behaviour began to grow eccentric. In 1837, at the instance of the patron, Earl Fitzwilliam, on whose estate he was living, he was confined to a private lunatic asylum at High Beach, in Epping Forest. Here he seems to have been well-treated, since Dr. Allen, who ran the place, was one of the most enlightened alienists of his day. The hallucinations from which he suffered at this period have been recorded. He believed himself to be married to Mary Joyce, and is also said to have given way to delusions that he was of noble descent. To his real wife Martha he seems to have been

indifferent; he was later to describe her to Allen as 'one of my fancies.'

In 1841 Clare escaped, and returned on foot to his Northamptonshire home, partly keeping himself alive by eating grass which he picked by the roadside. Patty looked after him, though he scarcely seemed to acknowledge her, believing himself to be married to Mary Joyce (whom he referred to as 'Mary Clare'), and did her best to prevent his being taken away once more to an asylum. Nevertheless, in December, 1841, he was certified as insane, because, among other things, it was alleged that he had been 'years addicted to poetical prosing,' and was confined in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum. Here he remained for another twenty-three years, almost forgotten by the world. His wife and children had little opportunity of visiting him, since, though he could receive visitors, they were too busy and too poor to make the journey to Northampton, but he was kindly treated, and allowed a certain amount of liberty. He continued to write, and to this period belong many of his most beautiful poems. Many of these are love-songs, in which the idealized figure of Mary Joyce, whom he believed to be his wife, and the mother of a family of children by him, continually appears. He died in 1863, and was buried in the churchyard of his native village.

There is no need to sentimentalize Clare. From his portrait there looks out upon us a face of peculiar spiritual beauty. There is the disconcerting clarity of a child's gaze in those eyes, and a like quality in the expression of the sensitive mouth. Yet it is not a face softened by weakness, or intellectual and emotional immaturity. Clare's genius was great enough to bring itself to fruition, survive his social and economic disadvantages; and the deficiencies of education these entailed. But his genius was of a sort which inevitably doomed him to spiritual solitude; and this the accident of his birth served greatly to exacerbate. His best-known poem, written in

Northampton Asylum, is justly famous as an expression of this loneliness.

I am: yet what I am none cares or knows,
 My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
 I am the self-consumer of my woes,
 They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
 Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
 And yet I am, and live with shadows tost
 Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
 Into the living sea of waking dreams,
 Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
 But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
 And e'en the dearest—that I lived the best—
 Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.
 I long for scenes where man has never trod,
 A place where woman never smiled or wept;
 There to abide with my Creator, God,
 And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
 Untroubling and untroubled where I lie,
 The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

Clare's distinctive qualities as a poet are a peculiar sensitiveness and accuracy of observation, an unforced simplicity of language, and an extreme integrity and purity of feeling. The bulk of what he wrote is large. We find these qualities generally diffused throughout his poetry, though somewhat rarely attaining sufficient intensity to take hold upon the memory and imagination. Nevertheless, there is scarcely anything he wrote which does not show some touches of poetic feeling of a kind hardly any other poet can display. In the work of his early and middle periods we see the poet in full enjoyment of his new-found genius, experimenting and writing for the mere pleasure of poetic creation and melodic invention. He composes tales and idylls in verse, passages of pure description, satires,

rhymed letters ; he re-handles folk-ballads, and invents songs of his own in the same idiom :

A faithless shepherd courted me,
He stole away my liberty.
When my poor heart was strange to men,
He came and smiled and stole it then.

When my apron would hang low,
Me he sought through frost and snow.
When it puckered up with shame,
And I sought him, he never came. . . .

He indulges in imitation of the literary models which his reading has discovered for him—of these imitations the most successful is his 'Ode to Autumn' written in imitation of Collins's 'Ode to Evening,' which is nevertheless an original poem in its own right. In this, particularly, there lay danger for him ; a false literary quality had completely swamped the slender talent of Bloomfield, and spoils page after page of Burns. But Clare miraculously escapes it. In describing nature, he always has his eye upon the object ; his accuracy in detail is astonishing. Nor, when he depicts human life in the country, does he indulge in the conventional sentimentalities which he might easily have caught from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois pastoralists.

It is true that he dwells here upon the more cheerful side of the picture ; the strong moral realism of Crabbe is beyond his range, though he has left at least one poem in which the evil arising from enclosures is touched upon. Technically, also, Clare retains his unforced limpidity. His blank-verse fragments are remarkably free and original ; his couplets run with a natural gait that reminds us of Chaucer. He is often at his best when he is writing directly in the folk-tradition, as in most of his songs. The cast of his language—especially the syntax and word order—where a

natural, unperiodic structure is the rule, and where inversions, when they occur, are never introduced with merely rhetorical intent, is one of the points in which he comes close to Blake.

But it is in the poems that he wrote when confined in the asylum that Clare's genius shows itself most indisputably. In some of them he returns again to the observation and recollection of external nature, but it is with a greater, often a strange intensity of vision. In such poems as 'Clock-a-clay' (lady-bird), his own sensibility seems to become completely identified with what he is describing. Some of the lyrics of this period, notably those connected with his more intimate emotions, attain, though through his madness, to a visionary apprehension of reality which is beyond the normal. Here again he is somewhat akin to Blake:

I peeled bits of straw and I got switches too
 From the grey peeling willow as idlers do,
 And I switched at the flies as I sat all alone
 Till my flesh, blood, and marrow was turned to dry bone.
 My illness was love, though I knew not the smart,
 But the beauty of love was the blood of my heart.
 Crowded places, I shunned them as noises too rude
 And fled to the silence of sweet solitude.
 Where the flower in green darkness buds, blossoms, and
 fades,
 Unseen of all shepherds and flower-loving maids—
 The hermit bees find them but once and away.
 Then I'll bury alive and in silence decay.

In such poems as these it is difficult to define rational meaning or even definite emotion; yet the intensity of passion is there. We might suppose ourselves listening to the voice, not of a man, but of a ghost—some spirit which has passed through and beyond suffering, so that it has somehow become impersonal, and part of

the natural landscape against whose background it utters its lament.

It seems as though Clare, who in his madness, gave a detailed eye-witness account of the execution of Charles I, and of the battle of the Nile, and declared that there was only one poet—Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, John Clare—possessed some genuine apprehension of states of being which transcend the personal, and had reached that borderline where hallucination passes into clairvoyance. Such a vision had always been implicit in his intense sensibility to the proper nature and life of natural objects; in some of his last poems it is expressed in notes of unequalled lyrical purity:

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, which fades like dew!
I love the fond,
The faithful, and the true.

Love lives in sleep,
The happiness of healthy dreams:
Eve's dews may weep,
But love delightful seems.

'Tis seen in flowers,
And in the morning's pearly dew;
In earth's green hours
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

In Clare's poetry the old, anonymous tradition of the English countryside suddenly becomes articulate in an individual voice. And he is the last representative of that tradition, which, in his own day, powerful social and economic factors had disrupted. But also, as much as Blake or Shelley, Wordsworth or Coleridge, he claims a place in the authentic company of the English Romantic poets.

MICHAEL AYRTON

A MASTER OF PASTICHE

(*A Personal Reaction to Picasso*)

‘There ought to be a dictator of painting.’—Picasso, 1935.

To write anything but praise, or to attempt anything but a favourable analysis of the present value and future significance of the art of Picasso, is to be attacked at once. I have taken this risk in print on several occasions and have been variously accused of personal jealousy, fifth-column activity and high treason. I have also been taken to task for changing my spots in midstream, to coin a mixed metaphor in the manner of the master’s own painting. It has been pointed out to me that, like most contemporary painters, I myself have been influenced by Picasso, and that I should genuflect before the work of that great genius who has altered the course of European art. Finally I have been told that I do not understand his art.

I have never denied his genius or its effect either upon European art or upon myself. Picasso’s influence has probably been greater in his own time than that of any artist in history, and unquestionably he has changed the course, not only of art, but of decoration, and the applied arts. There is no question of his genius. I suggest, however, that changing the course of European art does not *ipso facto* improve that course and that, whilst to have done so compels admiration, it does not necessarily command veneration. Such men as Hitler have changed the course of human history to the disadvantage of mankind, and I believe that Picasso, taking all into account, has been of very negative service to art in his changing of its course. But the one accusation I find hard to take, is that of not understanding Picasso. Heavens alive, his work is not

difficult to understand. If it was really obscure, if it really required long and concentrated study, Picasso would not be the richest and the most famous artist alive. Once the fairly simple mechanism of his approach is grasped, and once one is familiar with a large body of his work, his diverse mannerisms and his recapitulation of basic themes follow an inevitable, perfectly comprehensible course.

Picasso has required numerous art forms upon which to base his experiments. He is not concerned with nature, nor with a single tradition, and in this he differs from the artists of the past, as Woolworth's differs from the craftsman's shop. What he does is to engulf an existing formula, choosing it seems at random from the history of his art. It may be Negro sculpture, Greek vase painting, or the drawings of Ingres. This formula, once digested, he regurgitates, like the albatross feeding her young, accentuating certain characteristics and obliterating others. Having exhausted one formula he turns to another, possibly maintaining part of the first. As soon as the student recognizes the process, he will, with a fair knowledge of art history, be able to recognize the derivation and judge the value of the variations.

Nothing could be simpler than this process, and it is indicative of Picasso's genius that the objects he chooses as the vehicle for his method have always been equally simple—a table, a female nude, a piece of newsprint or an old guitar. From the point of view of the audience, the commonplace object combined with the spectator's vague familiarity with the underlying mode—the classic Greco-Roman head, for instance, establishes a comfortable association of ideas which prepares him for whatever apparently outrageous exaggeration Picasso may see fit to use to enliven his picture. Since Picasso has a magnificent gift for linear expression and complete technical mastery at his command, the result is a very tasty, or intentionally very disgusting, dish. But whatever the taste, it remains a dish; it is cooking, not art. The opposition will say nonsense;

they will say that all painting is only this, and that Picasso is perfectly entitled to employ these means since he triumphantly justifies them. I would say that whilst this utilization of an adopted manner begins the development of all young artists, whilst the influence and traditions of his predecessors are at the basis of all great artists' work, to carry on this procedure throughout a long life is not to develop a vision but to perfect a pastiche. Changing the derivation does not complete the artist. The difference between, say, Breughel and Picasso, is that whilst Breughel produced pastiches of Bosch in his youth he looked at nature as well and eventually arrived at a mature and personal vision of nature itself, whereas Picasso has never been able to shed the element of pastiche underlying his work because he has always looked to art and not to nature to supply his visual material. Paradoxically the *dilettanti* of to-day who are so foolishly quick to despise a legitimate influence present in a young artist's work are prepared to swallow with delight the painting of Picasso whose derivations have been so blatant for forty years. Originality is in itself an exceedingly unimportant aspect of art from the point of view of the practitioner, and it has only achieved a spurious importance during the twentieth century, the very times which have been dominated by Picasso himself.

This significant paradox is in my view one of the major disservices which the art of Picasso has paid to contemporary painting, for it is Picasso's transitions from one derivation to another which have created the false supposition that self-conscious variation of style is originality and therefore commendable. Genuine originality in painting is not a conscious virtue but merely the artist's minute personal addition made to a tradition by the study of nature. In a broadcast recently, an admirer of Picasso praised him for the fact that he had 'opened his mind with astounding versatility to a wide number of stylistic influences' and went on to enumerate them at length, as if there were some unusual virtue contained therein. But is

there? and is his constant delving into the secrets of gradually evolved methods applicable to the problems and ways of thought of divers times past, compatible with Picasso's mystic dictum, 'I find, I do not seek'? Theft may be the perquisite of genius in an art but kleptomania is another thing.

Perhaps the reply to my argument would be to repeat that any means are legitimate to attain the ends and are not Picasso's ends marvellous? In my view the whole of Picasso's art has been an intellectual exercise of which ninety per cent has been pure artistic vampirism without the natural visual stimulus necessary to produce great art. Picasso is a genius after all and can only be judged by those standards, for his ends are, if nothing else, marvellous as sheer virtuosity. Marvellous, but utterly false, and the means carry with them, in Picasso's supernormal talents, a tremendous power to communicate the spurious and to menace the living stream which the visual arts have been since pre-history. Picasso's achievement has been to juggle with the archaic so fast that it appears alive as it glitters in mid-air. Had he not been an acrobat, as Jean Cocteau remarked, he would not have saved himself. Picasso's intellectual power is coated with the fierce colour of his nationality. The trappings of Spanish passion, bulls, women, guitars, blood and cruelty, recur at intervals and convey, again I think by association of ideas and brilliance in performance, deep, vital emotions which, in my own view, are often simply not there.

I do not believe that it is possible to create living art out of anything but the direct visual experience of nature, combined with the heritage of a tradition, unless it be by the practice of magic ritual. Since Picasso does not attempt the former, he must be considered in terms of the latter, and considered in these terms his processes of stylistic inversion and formal disintegration are black magic, no more, no less. That inversion and disintegration of form are present in most of his work may be easily observed

at once in Cubism, which was based on the latter principle and in the convention which he has employed at intervals, of restating the human head in unrelated sections.* The parallel with black magic can be carried further, for destructive distortion and alteration of ritual is the basis of diabolism. To his most devoted admirers he is celebrated for his gift for paraphrase. Black magic is also the cult of personal power, and fame goes with it. Of these two latter attributes Picasso shows no lack. He is the most powerful influence and the most famous artist alive, but is it possible that any contribution to the mainstream of European art can be made by his particular form of diabolic egocentricity? In view of the fact that black magic is a death cult and in view of the fact that the whole impetus of Picasso's art stems from manners and modes created for now extinct ends—the Romanesque, Catalan primitives, the Greek vase and medieval stained glass are examples—he is a very master of necrophily. Magnificent embalming—but death all the same.

Regarded without hysteria, it is surely plain enough that Picasso's constant, mercurial changes of style, which are to-day extolled as the fruits of an unique and all-embracing genius, are not a genuine development but superlative conjuring. Remarkable though it is to have pulled so many rabbits from a three-cornered hat, it is not necessarily a superior procedure to the more prosaic course of visual development employed by all previous great masters of painting.

It is obvious that present-day transport and world-wide communications have made it possible for the twentieth-century artist to acquire a greater general knowledge of the world's art without leaving his capital city, than could his sixteenth-century predecessor. But Picasso's eclecticism is not excusable simply on the grounds that earlier masters would have utilized the same gamut of stylistic derivation

* 'In my case a picture is a sum of destructions.' Picasso, 1935. *Conversation with Picasso*—Christian Zervos—Cahiers d'Art, 1935.

as Picasso, had they had the opportunity. I do not believe that they would, because once each, following in his natural tradition, had accepted from his predecessors the influences of best service to his vision, he turned to nature for his material. Pieter Breughel, for instance, learned much from Hieronymus Bosch and Joachim Patenir in his youth, and indeed he scrupulously imitated the Bosch for several years; Watteau acknowledged and paid his debt to Rubens, El Greco to Tintoretto and Goya to Velasquez, but these men must have been equally well aware of other aspects of painting. Breughel must have seen Italian and Spanish pictures, Rembrandt, in his days of affluence, collected every form of *objet d'art* from Indian miniatures to Mantegnas, and Watteau knew the collections of pictures from all the European schools which were assembled in Paris, and so on. But these artists having assimilated what was useful to their own art, from that of other men and other times, looked at the object, and adapted it to their purposes. Herein they differ radically from Picasso, for they discarded the borrowed props of style quite early in life, in favour of natural observation. The art of a Breughel, a Rembrandt, or a Goya is a complete and logical development from beginning to end, so is that of Rouault or Renoir or even that of Blake; for though the latter borrowed technical crutches from the Italians, and though nature was a secondary consideration in his art, his expression was consistent and its strength lies in that consistency. Blake was not remarkable as a technician and his own technical shortcomings excuse to some extent his borrowed mannerisms. No such excuse is needed by Picasso, the greatest technician of his age.

I suggest that the sheer instability of Picasso's genius is not a priceless miracle, but simply the result of exhausting the possibilities of manner to such an extent that his most original-looking works are actually those in which he combines his own early periods with his current clichés, thus confusing the obvious sources. And yet he himself has

strenuously denigrated self-imitation.* The effect that idolatry of these essential weaknesses has had on his numerous followers has been to deify an originality which in actual fact is only ingenuity.

It is, however, obvious that no individual could maintain such sway over the arts for so long, or carry such conviction to so many intelligent and sensitive artists and laymen, unless he was possessed of tremendous powers. What these powers are, has been dilated upon at enormous length in numerous publications, but what I surmise they amount to is this: Picasso is a master technician and his many 'periods,' whilst they may not accord with the development of a real vision, are at least in accord with the prevailing hysteria of the times. Furthermore, the immense excitement which Picasso is able to evoke is in part due to his superb use of line, for he is primarily a draughtsman, and also to the emotion provoked by the novelty of his gift for paraphrase and his ability to carry a discovery, or the product of a movement, to a logical, or sometimes illogical, conclusion. It is part of his power that he is able to embrace the efforts of lesser men and restate their aims, in his own terms and in relation to the formula current in his own work. This in itself is the hall-mark of a particular form of genius. But more than all this, his power lies in his position relative to his times, his temporal domination. Nor is this incompatible with the archaism of the different stylistic starting points of each new '*époque*.' It is that Picasso is contemporary in the hysteria of his art in exactly the same way that Hitler was contemporary in the hysteria of his politics, much of which—anti-semitism is an example—is archaic in principle. In the course of profoundly disagreeing with my assessment of Picasso, a contemporary English artist once made the point that Picasso's major positive contribution to painting was his invention of the 'paraphrase of reality.' I do not believe that this is what he has done; rather I believe he has evolved a brilliant paraphrase of *art*, so brilliant

* 'I have a horror of repeating myself.' Picasso, 1935. *ibid*.

and so all-embracing that one is unable to see the wood for the trees and in the immense prodigality of his gifts he has thus foxed a whole generation into believing in a set of 'emperor's new clothes.'* Idolatry has been carried so far that Picasso's every work, from doodle to mural, is now greeted with indiscriminate approval. Even a piece of torn-up paper is solemnly reproduced in a recent book. His own clichés, which he has taken to imitating in his most recent work, are marked as wondrous and immaculate conceptions, new, devastatingly new phenomena of immense value, both in terms of money and posterity. But if one examines his life work, his many periods, one finds that in each one he has but grasped at the straw of another man's discoveries and twisted it to his own ends. This activity may be wonderful in the skill of the achievement, but it is not a deep and personal vision of nature or life and its products are as transitory as the winds. In time they will date as badly as the later music of Igor Stravinsky, a very similar if less important figure.

Picasso is first seen as a child prodigy, painting with precocious skill, and in Paris at the age of nineteen he embarked upon his first recognized 'period,' which is now named after Toulouse-Lautrec, who was the principal influence upon Picasso at this time. A perfectly legitimate derivation for a young artist, and undoubtedly of use to him. In 1901 he painted in a decorative, poster-like manner under the influence of van Gogh, Maurice Denis and Vuillard, and in 1902 he turned to Puvis de Chavannes, a painter of sad, blue lyrical pictures which he skilfully combined with El Greco and the seventeenth-century Baroque mannerists to produce the famous 'Blue period.' To this ragoût he added various of Degas's subjects and much of the latter's theatricality. The 'Pink period' which follows is still a fairly straightforward development from the Blue, incorporating the Harlequin of Watteau and a soft Greek

* 'The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.' *ibid.* ref.

flavour compatible with the wistful sentimentality which replaced the morbid gloom of the previous five years. The first of the abrupt transitions took place in 1906 when Matisse presented the young Picasso with a piece of Negro sculpture and Picasso abandoned his previous formula in favour of a stark series of pictures based on Negro art.

Three years later he recognized that Negro sculpture was compatible with Cézanne's compression and separation of natural forms, to underline their organic structure. Picasso seized on this logical practice and carried it to its illogical extreme in 'cubism' where his tendency to disintegrate form was given a specious theoretical backing by various poets and apologists. By 1911 the forms were so entirely disintegrated that, far from stressing the natural structure, the sections were only related in terms of design. Originality in one sense, but the basis was Cézanne's ready-made hypothesis, and thus was still based on art and not the observation of nature. Cubism, which passed through various forms, from close imitation of Cézanne, through the 'facet cubism' of complete disintegration, arrived in 1914 at a decorative formula for producing harlequins and loaded tables which included the use of 'pointillism' which Picasso borrowed from Seurat. In 1917 Picasso went to Rome to design the ballet 'Parade' for Diaghilev and in Rome he embarked upon the first of his dual roles. He painted decorative cubist harlequins and at the same time heavy, romantic, realistic female nudes derived from Roman sculpture. His ballet designs combined both, and in 'Pulcinella' an echo of the 'Pink period' with an added overtone of *commedia de l'arte*. Picasso's appetite for influence now became increasingly vicarious, for he had added Ingres to his scalp belt in 1915, with a large number of pencil drawings in the manner of the great classicist. The 'neo-classic' period which resulted lasted until 1924, but the decorative cubism continued through a series of monumental still lifes which became steadily more calligraphic as Picasso's great linear gift developed. These still

lives still owed a good deal to Cézanne, but they were interwoven with various decorative conventions invented by George Braque and colour relationships derived from Matisse. The late twenties produced a wide variety of concurrent manners from numerous sources, and it is between 1927 and 1936 that Picasso evolved something like an individual contribution to art, a synthetic but very convincing paraphrase. This was naturally a linear convention, arising out of cubism, and the paraphrase remained a paraphrase of art, but the complexity of interwoven influences was such that this very paraphrase seems to be a personal statement, culminating in the famous 'Guernica' of 1936. But during these years, and particularly between 1930 and 1934, Picasso was making hay with the Romanesque, with certain Greek conventions, with a formal still-life manner based on medieval stained glass and with variations on the theme of Mathias Grünewald's 'Crucifixion' at Colmar.

The effect of Grünewald upon Picasso has been enormous, probably the most important individual influence on his work after Ingres, and probably also the most beneficial, since Grünewald was too big to be swallowed in one gulp and had to be digested slowly. Grünewald himself was probably the greatest Gothic expressionist, if this rather clumsy term may be permitted, who has ever lived. Torment was his métier; he twisted the limbs of his crucified Christ and lamenting Madonna into the most agonizing expressions of human suffering ever portrayed. This was grist to the cruel Spanish mill of Picasso's search for a means of expressing his own apprehension, for Picasso, naturally enough, was sensitive to the increasing misery of his times. Grünewald was the most potent source for such a statement, and from 1930 Picasso began to paint crucifixions and tormented figure pictures concurrently with neo-Greek line drawings, such as the celebrated illustrations to Ovid, curvilinear still lifes in a stained-glass manner and jolly beach pictures in which he combined his earlier

Greco-Roman nudes with flat pattern cubism. The so-called 'Bone period' is, however, the most interesting of these multifarious activities, and here Grünewald was responsible for the passion and cruelty of the expression. Between 1928 and 1933 Picasso produced a great deal of sculpture, an art in the practice of which he was singularly, even uniquely, inefficient. He had no sense of the material and inevitably produced the clumsiest possible forms. To justify these heavy lumps he immediately utilized them as sources of expression in paint which he knew he could master, and grafted his Grünewald formula on to it to produce his 'Bone' pictures. In 1934 trouble in Spain turned Picasso to a reconsideration of the bull-fight theme, which he made the somewhat banal symbol of his country's pain. At last he was truly moved by an emotion unrelated to art, and, in my own view, the real potential of Picasso may be seen during the brief period between 1934 and 1937. All the technical mastery and gift of expression was in those years turned to a genuine purpose. The hieratic gestures of the figures in the best of his pictures leading up to and following the 'Guernica' of 1936 are derived from Grünewald, the colour and manner from van Gogh, but here, in such key works as the 'Minotauromachy' etching and the paintings of weeping women, something like a genuine synthesis was achieved.

Tenth-century Catalan wall painting was the next art to feed Picasso's avid appetite for formulæ and the multi-eyed profiles of the years preceding the 1939 war are derived from that source. During the war, he neither advanced nor added any new conventions to those existing in 1938, except in etching, where his aquatint illustrations to Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* are variations on Chinese and perhaps Persian mannerisms.

What then is the sum total? What is the actual value of the pictorial three-ring circus? To pin the history of one's own times, like a butterfly to a setting board, takes genius, and that Picasso has done; to influence the visual

approach of half the world requires supernormal power, and this Picasso has; but in my view neither of these impressive achievements adds up to great art. In the hierarchy or the great masters, the greatest have a quality beyond the temporal which Picasso lacks, and shock tactics are not a final way to alter human vision. The crux and centre of Picasso's art is, in my view, hysteria and in this he so echoes the prevailing evil of the age that he seems to be its prophet. Added to this is the element of speed, which Picasso has brought to such a jet-propelled perfection that he can hit the target of taste with repeated but varied hammer blows. For several years now he has painted enormous canvases at the rate of one or more per day, apart from his enormous production of drawings, etchings, lithographs, and sculpture. One of his many styles is therefore almost bound to strike a chord in the personal taste of each individual spectator. One final thing has helped to make Picasso the monument of his time, and that is the useful fact that his painting almost invariably looks better in reproduction than in the original. This is in part due to the fact that Picasso is^o first and last a draughtsman and quality of paint is never a very important consideration in his work, so that his pictures tell on a small scale as, say, a Renoir does not. A glance at the recent works at the Victoria and Albert Museum demonstrated this at once. There was no feeling for the medium of oil paint in any of these pictures.

The whole body of Picasso's work amounts, in my opinion, to a vast series of brilliant paraphrases on the history of art. This is in itself a wonderful phenomenon entirely compatible with the times, but I believe that it is only of value viewed in this light. In terms of the art of painting, in terms of the living, breathing symbol of man's tribute to the work of God, it is no more than a vast erection of bones in the graveyard of experience.

THE LIVING MOMENT

DUNSTAN THOMPSON

A TRAVELLER TO DEPTFORD

Midday at Charing Cross. The station seemed small and there were few people about. I asked for a train to Deptford: the next one would go in an hour but I might leave at once for New Cross which would be only a five-minute walk from Deptford. Why not? I bought the ticket, crossed the uncrowded concourse, and went through the barrier to the platform beside which stood a brief green electric train. The empty compartment was dingy, dusty, undecorated by the usual pictures of places one is not going to. Nobody else got in with me. After a few minutes a whistle blew and the train started slowly out into the sunshine.

London looked white and palatial, a cascade of buildings along the river, spires of the City churches farther off, and in the distance the tremendous bulk of St. Paul's. Once over the bridge the train picked up speed, zoomed along, swaying and rattling through a rude landscape of grey tenements and grey churches and grey apartment houses, all showing their stark brick backsides, all, despite the sunshine on them, old and ugly. There were stops at Waterloo and London Bridge where mechanical voices recited a quick litany of further stations, and other people boarded the train. Although the river continued not far away, there was nothing to see of it; only, as the houses went by, through gaps between them, now and again a nearer view of St. Paul's, now and again the two towers of Tower

Bridge. For a moment I saw a bombed church standing just below the track, gutted, no more than a calcined shell; a strange columnar steeple twisted crazily above it. Late eighteenth century? beginning of the nineteenth?—I wondered. Suddenly the train was at a station: New Cross; I got out.

I asked a newsboy how to get to Deptford. He told me to go out the door, turn left and walk on. Once in the street I could not ignore the obvious quality of where I was. This was not a slum but the next worse thing, a workmen's quarter, a mean grim place, with nothing gay or charming about it. Only the sunshine redeemed it from despair. Some street-cars and buses and trucks went by; people in old clothes, mostly old women, passed on their errands in and out of lack-lustre shops along the street. In one of these, a bedraggled florist, I bought an eight-penny bunch of violets. I did not think anyone would particularly notice violets; roses now somehow seemed too violent, here almost outrageous. After a while I decided I must have reached Deptford and I asked one of the old women going by. She said I should turn the next corner and I would be right. At the corner I turned.

There was no difference, or if there was, it was only a deepening of the shadow, a darker greyness. There appeared to be more people, though, and this street was less wide. I caught the smell of over-ripe vegetables and rank fish, and along with those the smell of cheap greasy cooking from the open doors of food shops. Beer barrels were being unloaded from a truck and rolled down a hatch in the sidewalk, which I stepped warily around, jostled by old women with market bags. There were barrows along the kerb and the old women surged about them buying leeks and potatoes. The crowd became so great it was almost like being at a fair or circus, except here there were no high spirits and there was no fun. I looked for a policeman to ask him directions but none was around. Instead, I asked one of the old women but she did not know.

I had better ask someone else and so I went into the nearest shop. An undertaker's shop.

A bell rang somewhere in the back but nothing happened. I looked about. A poor sad place without anything unusual. Part was curtained off but I could see around the curtains to a sort of altar with a crucifix above it. In the shop window there were model tombs and gravestones and a small plaster statuette of what must have been a mad child, which was a replica, so some smudged print said, of a larger work executed in 1885 by an earlier undertaker. These were all sifted over with dust. One wall was given up to old showcases behind whose grimy glass lay a lot of cardboard boxes. I read the labels. One Gross Brass Handles. One Gross Brass Bolts. One Gross Brass Nameplates and Crosses. Angels and Flowers and White Oddments. Except for the silence there was no sign of death; I might have been in a hardware shop. Just as I was wondering what went on in the back, an old woman came out to ask if she could help me. I told her where I wanted to go and she said she did not know it and went away to look for a map. In a moment she returned and said she could not find the map and that I must ask someone on the street. I thanked her and went out.

The first person, another old woman, told me to go as far as the tram line and then to turn right by the public house. I did so, but there was nothing to be seen. I asked someone else, also an old woman, who told me I was just a block away. I went on. This district was not crowded; there was, in fact, hardly anyone about; here even the old women were gone. Some ragged children were playing by the gutter; in the distance I saw a sailor. At the end of the block, I crossed the street and turned down to the left. On one side was a large fake Tudor building, which I supposed must be a model housing unit. It was pretentious and dirty. A power station loomed above it, a giant complex of stone supporting two chimneys, twenty-story high, made to look like colossal Doric columns. I thought

of what a ruin it would some day make. Then I looked ahead and saw a ruin already there and right away I knew I had arrived. The dark brick piers of the gateway were topped by worn-out white stone skulls; the iron gates hung loosely from their rusted hinges. Beyond lay a tumble of tombs all broken and overturned. And in the centre stood what was left of the church, roofless, burnt out, St. Nicholas, Deptford.

I went inside the yard and began to pick my way through the desolation. Someone, a child, I supposed, had smeared skulls and crossbones in whitewash over most of the grave-stones. Those which still stood were at crazy angles. The tops of nearly all the tombs had been shattered and splintered and pried loose; the desecration had been violent and consistent. What the bombs had left, the children had smashed. But there was no getting inside the church. The doors and windows had been bricked up, though there seemed small reason, for I could see through a hole in the wall that all the interior had been wrecked; only piles of rubble marked the sanctuary. I went very slowly around the outside, looking for what I could not find, spelling out the stone high up the south wall which said that the church had been rebuilt in sixteen-something. I tried the graveyard walls and made a slow circuit and read each tablet but did not see the one I wanted. In a far corner I came upon a sort of doll's house made of broken tombstones where two dirty children played. They stared strangely at me but said nothing. Elsewhere I looked into a small burnt-out building, a kind of belvedere, where the floor was covered with excrement and the detritus of sex.

In the sunshine the desolation was profound, more so, it seemed to me, than if the day had been dark. I wondered where to put my violets. The grave is unknown, one secret agent not yet found out. I knew there was supposed to be a memorial, a name cut in stone on some wall, but I had not found it. Now it did not matter much where

the violets went; I could no longer honestly mean them for a private person; they were exacted by all these profaned dead. There was a piece of a tomb left against the sanctuary wall; whatever name had been on it had been rained away; it would do as well as another. I put the violets there, thinking that someone would probably steal them soon. One of those savage children would pull the petals to pieces and strew them over the derelict ground. But that would do the dead no harm. Or perhaps the flowers would be given to someone, which would mean love, which would be something the dead are supposed to approve. Anyway, there the violets were.

I left right away. One of the old women had told me that the vicar lived somewhere near-by. 'He always gives me the Parish Magazine.' I went away from the broken church, the fake apartment house, the towering power station, down a short street to a crossing where a policeman stood doing nothing. I asked him for the vicar but he did not know where I should go. On the other side of the street I saw a sign saying 'Church Hall' and I said I would ask there. The policeman thought that might be a good idea. I went over to a grey brick building which was not so beautiful as a garage. There was a stained poster nailed to a locked door but I cannot remember what it said. For the luck of it, I went on to a very small house which stood against the far side of the hall and rang the bell. A young man in a collarless shirt and grey trousers opened the door. I asked about the vicar. 'He lives very far away.' Then he told me to come in. I followed him through a kind of linoleum closet into the front room which was very small and very clean. There was a piano at one wall, a desk by the window, and round about a great many new books, which were mostly bound in red and green and looked unmistakably religious. On the desk, an indexed box of cards and a green-shaded lamp. The young man lounged against the piano. With the two of us, the room was crowded.

I find it difficult to remember what he looked like. He was husky and hearty and, I should say, very tired. He was sorry he was not fully dressed. As he spoke he twisted his mouth into a most unhappy smile; his voice was passionless with the weary right accent; he was from some university. There was nothing to be done, he said. Everything that had not been bombed had been stolen. 'They have taken the last of the timber for firewood.' I asked: 'Can no one stop the children from breaking into the graves?' Even to me, my voice sounded remote, superior, infuriating. He looked at me. 'If you put a policeman there all the time, I suppose so. It's not just the children, though.' He did not seem to think it mattered very much, nor, once I had asked the question, did I. Then I spoke about the memorial. He smiled, again unhappily. 'It has been taken away and is somewhere safe.' People sometimes came and asked about it. 'I suppose you are researching?' He said that some day they would rebuild the church but he did not sound as though he believed it. I thanked him and he shook hands and I went out the door, leaving him alone with the silent piano and the red and green bound books about God.

The whole thing was done now. I walked past the patient idle policeman and followed the tram line to Greenwich. Was this, I wondered, Deptford Strand, and if so where had that tavern been which was kept by the Widow Bull? I found no answers. Some sailors from a foreign ship, who were wearing caps with long black streamers, passed by talking in a strange language. I came to a pub and went into part of it, for even here, far from the middle class, the distinctions between Saloons and Lounge and Private and Public were maintained by wooden partitions and separate doors. The part I was in, a half-way place between the proud and the humble, was empty. A clean quiet girl gave me a glass of light ale and then went off to another part of the bar; I was by myself in a small cabined space where there were a table and three long benches and the

sunlight through a window of frosted glass. The table and benches and floor had been scrubbed to a soft colourless tone of grey. I sat drinking the ale and listening to the voices of old women in the next bar talking against the Jews. I thought back to the swastika I had seen smeared on one of the tombs. After a while I had another glass of light ale and then another but when I asked for bread and cheese the girl said she was sorry there was none. I went out into the afternoon and walked along the street past an inlet from the river where barges were unloading coal. Not far off, between masts and derricks, I saw the grey superstructure of a warship. In a short time I had come to Greenwich.

The rest does not matter. Barbed wire and guards kept me from the Painted Chamber in the Naval College. Instead I went on to the Maritime Museum: no trouble about getting in there. Wandering about the Queen's House, that smart heartless box put up by Inigo Jones, going from one good plain room to the next good plain room, remarking the pure boredom of minor perfection, I looked listlessly at the portraits of murderous royalties, their attendant gangsters, My Lord This and My Lord That, and went out unimpressed except by the brutal butcher's face of the first Defender of the Faith and the bejewelled dispassion of the unsexed bastard queen called Gloriana. But there was more to see farther on and I dutifully saw it: sextants and quadrants and compasses and maps and astrolabes, miniature ships, miniature barges, miniature rowboats, gold plate and silver plate and commemorative crystal, chunks of the deck and bits off the bridge from various immortal dreadnoughts, memorabilia of heroes, their swords, their medals, their cocked hats, their brass buttons, and a whole pantheon of knickknacks and junk belonging to Nelson, including a treasure chest of cheap presents given by him to Lady Hamilton. I looked at statues of sexless admirals, paintings of meaningless battles, the absolute deadness of history. Because there was no smoking in these galleries of sea

glories I went into a great bare room filled with linoleum-covered tables where a slattern gave me tea and bread and butter and where I sat alone staring out the window at Greenwich Park and the hideous Observatory on the top of the hill which might from the look of it have been a mosque on the moon. Then I returned through the halls and corridors and glass cases and came out into the sun.

Another green electric train took me back. As it rattled through Deptford I looked again at where I had been; I could see nothing of the church, but the fake apartment house was plainly in view and high above it the twin columns of the power station stood up monstrous and magnificent, such a memorial as might have satisfied even Tamburlain the Great. There was no one in the compartment with me, so I did not mind saying out loud

Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?

The train ran on through the desolation of the poor, and as those grey slums went by I thought of the entry in the burial register of St. Nicholas—no doubt put away with the other things in a safe place: 'Christopher Marlow slaine by ffrancis ffrezer; the 1 of June.' In a little while I was back in London.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

FROM A WINTER JOURNAL

Rhodes, 1946.

The Ægean is still waiting for its painter; waiting in the unselfconscious purity of its lights and contours for someone to go really mad over it with a loaded paintbrush. Looking down from the sentinel's tower in the fortress of Castello, watching the swifts totter and fall into the blue gulf, you begin painting it for yourself in words. Cerulean sky with white cirrus; veridian to peacock's tail where the sea bangs upon the edges of the cliff-wall. But to paint Greece one must do more than play with the primary colours; one must convey the soft chalky whiteness of the limestone, the chalk-dust that comes off the columns, the soft pollen-like bloom upon the vases. Then, too, you would have to master the queer putty-mauve and putty-grey tones of the islands—rock that seems to be slowly becoming red-hot. Volcanic notes.

The south-westerly point of Rhodes—the granite butt of Cape Prasso—used to be called Cape Tranquillo on the old Catalan charts. Near-by at Plimiri in the wilderness of minefields constructed by the Germans, the spades of the sappers have turned up columns and pediments of some old temple. Nobody can reach them because of the mines.

If one were so silly as to want proof of the essentially Greek nature of the Dodecanese islands one would only have to remark on the direct continuity of peasant legends and beliefs with those obtaining elsewhere; the folk-lore of Rhodes, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Vrontè, is already known territory—though the slender pamphlets in which this model anthropologist has issued the results of his

researches are very hard to find. The search is worth while, however, for the legends of the peasant to-day often go side by side with what history has taught us to believe as facts.

In ancient times the power and the glory of Rhodes lay in the three gleaming cities: Lindos, blazing on its promontory above the land-locked harbour, Cameirus tucked into the limestone hills as a letter into an envelope, and Jalysus commanding the fine valley at the end of which Trianda now stands. An earthquake demolished them, and the homeless inhabitants planned the site of Rhodes town, giving it two harbours and foundations believed indestructible. The peasant legend of to-day agrees to some of these readings: 'After the plague of horse-flies which bit everyone and died, came the great earthquake on the feast day of St. Demetrius. In that earthquake the three cities of Rhodes were destroyed, and so they built the new city in a place where it would not be affected by such things.'

History has not as yet elucidated the problem of the horse-flies, which still exist in large numbers.

The bitterness of the oleander is reputed to have come about in an unusual manner. After the crucifixion the Virgin was sadly walking towards Golgotha when she caught the hem of her dress on an oleander-bush and tore it. She cursed the tree, saying: 'May you have the bitterness that I have in my heart this day'; and from that time forward the oleander's juice has been bitter and acid. No such thing seems to have befallen the hibiscus, whose lovely red blossoms stab out the cottage gardens by Philereimo in carmine dots. But the juice of the oleander is used as a styptic for scratches.

The Kallikanzaros, Pan's youngest surviving brother, is the gremlin of the peasants. People who have been lucky enough to meet a Kallikanzaros have described him as a smaller edition of Pan, but with horns, pointed ears, and

hooves all complete. He has been seen in almost every part of Greece and it is only right that he should also have devoted a part of his time to Rhodes. Here, however, he is known as a Kaous—a word probably derived from that meaning ‘heat, combustion.’ The idea of cautery and branding also comes from it. The idea behind such a word is perhaps that the Kaous, coming from hell, is driven to perform his hundred and one mischiefs by the heat as much as anything. ‘On hot bricks.’ The Kaous behaves as if, in the American phrase, he had ‘ants in his pants.’ I leave the etymological ramifications of the word to be explored by experts. The Kaous, however, has one or two characteristics which have not, as far as I can remember, been recorded elsewhere. For instance, the peasant legends say that if a wife sleeps with her husband on the 25th of March, the child, which will inevitably be born on Christmas Eve, is doomed to be a Kaous. The Kaous circulates for the most part after dark, stopping up chimneys, turning milk sour, and generally frightening people out of their wits. He cries as he goes: ‘Burn and I burnt’ in a high thin voice. If anyone answers a Kaous he will have the following question put to him: ‘Feathers or lead?’ The correct answer for those who wish to avoid an ugly scene is ‘Feathers.’ To answer ‘Lead’ would be to enrage it. But sometimes even the right answer angers the Kaous. There is a story told by a certain Basil of Kremasto which deserves to be recorded here as a warning to those who go walking after dark. Basil met a Kaous and answered ‘Feathers’ to its question, hoping to get off scot-free. The Kaous however jumped on his back and rode him all over Anatolia for the space of a night, leaving him so exhausted that he was almost unable to tell his story in the tavern; and was just able to prove its veracity by showing his audience an apple he had plucked from a tree in the course of his breakneck journey.

A man from the village of Siana, made of different stuff, once caught a Kaous by the hair, carried it home, and

burnt a hole in its legs with a red-hot iron. Out of the wound crawled hundreds of devilish little snakes, and the Kaous was suddenly healed. It came to itself and said: 'Deeply I slept, and lightly I've woken.'

Werewolves also appear in Rhodes with distressing frequency. If a woman die in childbirth, says the legend, she becomes a werewolf; and in order to prevent her rising from her grave the village often put a cross of bramble over it. This is usually efficacious.

Lindos is the beauty spot of Rhodes; the castle rides the stone promontory like the proud crest on a cockerel's head. Five hundred feet below the harbour lies, all but landlocked, and green to the sandy edges of the loveliest beach in the island. Opposite the knob of Cleobulus' tomb; but where is the tomb of Cleobulina, his daughter, who followed in the steps of the sage, writing epigrams and acrostics? History does not say. Cleobulus shares with Pythagoras the distinction of admitting women into the charmed circle of knowledge. Lindos in his time was what Port Said is now, or Naples; a great clearing house for the trade of the eastern Levant. And what a town!

March morning. Last night rain fell, and the whole landscape has the rinsed dewy freshness of a canvas newly painted. The harbour has suddenly become a butterfly—every stitch of canvas is up drying, and all faintly sinking and rising, piercing its own reflections on the glassy sea. Turkey's lined mountains, where the peasants say you can still see the claw-marks of the dragons that once haunted this place, shine gold and green in the sunlight. On the green glade above the spur of Monte Smith the off-white plumes of asphodels have begun to raise themselves among the trees. Contemporary beliefs suggest that asphodels should not be picked, as this hinders the orchards from bearing. Disciples of Jung please note.

St. Constantine's Day is a day of coronation for the fig and the pomegranate; the owner of the trees pays them a special visit and crowns them with wreaths of oleander and wild marjoram. The peasants call this 'getting engaged,' and the object of the ceremony is to make the trees bear. If, adds the story, the owner omits this ceremony and does not visit his trees, they imagine him to have died, and from sadness do not bear.

In the enchanted harbour of Lindos the little red sailing-boat lies at anchor. The sea is very still, and one can only measure the pressure of the current along her keel by watching the reflection of the sail quietly breathing to itself. Sprawling in the hot sand under the plane-tree which grows so improbably close to the salt water, I wonder for the thousandth time what is the magic of the ancient world which has exercised so vast an effect on Europe; how is it that these small cities with their dazzling white temples succeeded in casting the nets of their mythology and their grammar across the world? A million scholars have been busy on the problem, and for all their knowledge it has not been solved. Perhaps it lies in the universality of the phenomenal world as it presented itself to the Greek thinkers—the universality of its application in thought, in paint, in poetry. Fire, garlic, water, air—all the elements of life here provided not only the natural theatre of investigation for the philosopher, but also the palette of the painter, and the springboard for the poet. While the engineer studied the displacement of bodies in water, the peasant carefully made an inventory of the different springs with their different varieties of water, and the poet began 'O sea'—and could get no further than lifting his eyes and letting himself be choked by the marine landscape.

Or do the words still mean more in Greek than they do to us? Study the various ways in which the word 'bread' is used in modern Greek and you will decide that it possesses a biblical significance still. 'Daily bread' they

say, or 'the staff of life'—whereas to us bread has become Hovis or Wholemeal. In Greece the fisherboys put out at dawn with a lump of bread, a few onions, some garlic, and a pitcher of water. 'Water' again is a word whose application carries overtones. Perhaps there are other elements which to-day could give us clues to the way the ancient Greeks thought: for the life has changed little, and the characteristics of the race hardly at all.

On the seventh day of a newborn child's life, says Vronté, there is a ceremony enacted which is a very old one. I think its counterpart could be found in Frazer. The midwife takes the baby in her arms and puts into its hand a morsel of bread and a candle. Thus they enter the room where the confinement took place and salute the mother according to custom. The aunt says to the midwife: 'A good day to the newborn.' The nurse answers: 'A good evening to the newborn.' Then the aunt asks: 'Where did you go, and whom did you meet?' To this the nurse replies: 'I saw the fate of the child. It distributed all the good things of life to it, both for itself and for its mother and father, sisters and brothers. And its fate has married the child.'

In other parts beyond the valley of Trianda from which this story comes they have variations of the same story.

They knock on the door and the following dialogue takes place:

'Open and I enter.'

'Who may you be?'

'I am the fate of the newborn child.'

Afterwards they put it back in its cradle, surrounded with presents and talismans, and a drop of honey is put on the babe's tongue, 'to sweeten its life.'

Having only recently written a book very largely dedicated to the honour and glory of St. Spiridion, patron saint of Corfu, I am delighted to find that in Rhodes the village of Tholos has also adopted him, and that on one

occasion he even treated Rhodes to his plague-scaring act which saved the Corfiots so often in the Middle Ages. In this part of the world the plague is an old woman dressed in black, who, say the peasants, circulates at night and carries off those men who 'have it on their cards' (literally). When Rhodes was ravaged by the plague Tholos alone did not get it, for St. Spiridion, urgently summoned from his velvet-lined casket in Corfu, circled the village tirelessly for a whole night, lantern in hand. That was enough for the old woman in black.

The black pest has obviously exercised the imagination of the peasant to a considerable extent. Many are the theories given to account for its appearance. One of the oddest is the theory that the plague came from the rags which a king once used to clean his bloody sword on some unnamed battlefield. A story for Freudians to whom all folklore is grist for the analytical mill. Another story: One day the plague sent her daughter to a shepherd with the gift of a sheep. The shepherd followed the girl to the cave of the plague itself. There he saw millions of lamps alight—one for every man alive in the world. He also recognized his own lamp and next to it that of his brother. 'Can't you,' he asked the plague, 'take a little oil from my brother's lamp and put it into mine? He has more, and mine is nearly out.' The plague replied in magistral fashion: 'No, I can't. For each man's oil is measured out for him by God.' Whereat the shepherd went his way, cursing the plague in horrible fashion—but not forgetting to take off the sheep which he had accepted from the daughter.

The Strigla is another vivid eruption of the peasant subconscious. She is, says Rodd, descended directly from the Roman stryx—a bird-woman who flies noiselessly about at night to suck the blood of mortals. In Rhodes she reveals herself in Lent, when she is popularly supposed to drown newborn babies and to make pregnant women miscarry.

As for the Nereids—they are the presiding spirits of these islands; almost every spring is haunted by them, almost every old tree derives its individual spirit from them, and everywhere in the long verdant valleys beyond Monte Smith you will find dells and glades where the circles of daisies mark their dancing floors. They are benign spirits, fond of running water and shade; though not all their manifestations are harmless, and the superstitious fear them. All the half-witted children are supposed to have been bewitched by Nereids, and woe to the man who unwittingly intrudes upon one of their dances, for they will force him to join in and dance till he drops. Once upon a time near Aphando, where the dates were supposed once to grow, and where now the fig-trees stand in their solid lowering stances, like crocodiles, heavy with fruit; in Aphando there was a shepherdess who had lately borne a child. She was on her way up the hill to her sheepfold when she came upon a group of Nereids dancing. She began to run, but they overtook her; but on her back, in her little bag, she carried the swaddling-clothes of the child, and when the Nereids touched her they recoiled, crying: 'It burns. It burns.'

Rodd has a chapter on Nereids which is worth reading. I understand now why the whole countryside folds up like a flower during the midday hours; why the self-respecting husbandman and townee alike prefers a carefully shuttered room to the intensity, the silence and brilliance of the southern afternoons. It is a weird time of day when everything seems to succumb to the silence—everything except the tireless cicada. It is the hour, says Rodd, when Pan takes his rest; and he quotes the swain in Theocritus:

O Shepherd, not at noon, we may not pipe at noon,
For Pan we dread, who then comes from the chase
Weary and takes his rest . . .

Hence the haunting fear of the tree's shade; no labourer will sleep under the shade of an old tree, or one that is supposed to have grown a spirit. For it is here in the shadows of trees, at crossroads, by running water, that Pan's assistants, the contemporary Nereids, lie in waiting. Flash of naked bodies between the trees of Siana and the noise of the spring interrupted by the sound of drinking! Sweep of skirts as the dancers line out on the daisy-clad slopes by St. Nicholas!

'Nympholepts' was the name the ancients chose for those whose mental balance had been disturbed by an intrusion into this shadow-world which lies, like the penumbra of the moon, against the white cold light of the reality we believe we share. Those whom the nymphs afflict suffer from a tendency to depression and fits of frenzy; to-day the Nereids are responsible for your melancholy, your desire for solitude, your desire to fly from your kind. People born on Saturday are specially susceptible to the Nereid's spells; they live in remote islands, shun society, sleep badly—and perhaps one should add, write books which nobody reads.

And now the story of the lute-player whose playing so enchanted the Nereids that they came out to dance for him and did not harm him. He played to them for a month, and fell in love with one of them—a tall black-haired girl of seventeen. How could one take a Nereid for a bride? The village fortune-teller, after thought, told him a way. At the first cockcrow the Nereids dissolve into the air; but one dawn, as the cock crowed, he leaped up and seized his Nereid by the hair. She struggled but it was too late. In the early light he found she had changed into a woman and she meekly followed him back to the village and became his wife. There was one drawback; she was speechless. But she was a model wife and bore him a son. Afflicted by her silence (silence is the one thing

unendurable to Greeks) he consulted the village fortune-teller and was advised to make her speak by pretending to throw their newborn child into the oven. This he did, and the Nereid rushing at him with a cry of rage, snatched the child from him and disappeared. She is often to be seen now by those who walk in the olive groves from the Philereimo side of Marizza. A Nereid who has borne a child can no longer return to her comrades. They have cast her out, and banished her to a small lonely spring, where she is often encountered, standing alone with the child in her arms and weeping.

We are moving softly towards the first warm corners of spring. The flies have taken courage and produced a few diminutive summer fledglings which warm themselves on the window-panes all morning. On the warm eastern slopes of the little hill where we walk every Sunday the spring flowers have begun to insist on their share in the weather. Bees falter and fumble round them and an occasional dragon-fly with its prismatic head swerves across the grass under the umbrella pines. The bully beef and the white wine taste delicious. Chocolate is rationed to a few bars a week, but a friendly sergeant has given us one extra which we have saved for Sunday. Islands strung out in the channel like a necklace—dour Simi, Allinia, Chalchida, and Telos where the red honey comes from. Northward Rhodes tapers down to a plane-shaped edge picked out in green fronds and coloured sails. Would it cost us more than, say, UNRRA's budget, to make the new world as lovely as the ancient? But then we would have to become people again instead of rodents.

JIRŮ MUCHA

ROOTS

(Translated from the Czech by E. Osers)

He bent down once more and thrust his spade into the loose cool earth. There was a smell of freshly dug soil, of the thick clumps of wild thyme in the warm grass and the rotting leaves on the hazel bushes. He tightened his muscles, threw up a lump of clay into the bright daylight, stuck his spade into the ground and wiped his burning palms on his trousers. Then he turned as though he had only just noticed his wife who was standing a few steps away, holding with both hands a wicker basket with his lunch. She waited for him to speak to her.

She had a round face and blue eyes which were half shut because of the blinding sun. She smiled. Her bare legs were firm and slender.

'What have you brought?' he asked, watching her hips against the blue sky. He was glad that he had a sturdy wife who could work hard, bring up the children and knead the white dough with her broad hands. Above him there was the sky and before him the wide open landscape, green, rust-coloured, and flat all the way to the horizon where the day turned to purple and overbrimmed with sunlight. He could see also the river with its muddy, glistening, motionless surface between the silvery willows, and nearer still, just below the slope, the white houses of the village huddled close together along the dusty road. Not all the houses were white. Some were bright blue or pale green, or had a blue base and white walls. These were the houses where the contented everyday life of the new settlers had already taken root. But elsewhere there were still blind windows, and in the gardens burdock had crept over the flower beds.

From where he stood the man could also see the roof of his farm, with its many new patches of brick-red tiles. It was good to see the roof was repaired. The farm gates were also new. He had chopped the old ones into firewood and stacked it up neatly along the wall of the shed. He would have to cut a great deal more wood if he wanted good fires in the winter. But there would be time for that next month when the mornings would be chilly and swinging the axe would be just what he needed to get his circulation going.

I must have a go at that hen-house before the rains come, he thought to himself as he sat down on the grass. His wife had advanced a few steps and put the wicker basket on the ground. It contained the same things as yesterday and the day before. Cheese, bread and wine.

He fished his knife out of his pocket and said: 'Don't stand there. Come and sit down on the grass.'

'No,' she said and a slight shiver ran through her. 'I'll stand.' She looked around. 'I'll wait till you've finished.'

He cut a piece of cheese and laid it on the dark bread. Then he uncorked his bottle and drank.

'The wine will be sweet this year,' he remarked. 'Lots of sunshine.'

About them, all over the hillside, climbed the vineyards, dry and warm and deep red in the hot still air. Above their heads the sky was as blue as over the plain ahead. Only its colour was even richer and deeper where it filled in every space between the red and amber leaves of the vines. Close to the ground the gold-coloured sugary grapes pushed out into the light. They were full and firm like women's breasts, warm and heavy in a man's palm.

The man took a bite of his bread and cheese and gazed at the newly dug soil before him. A worm cut in two by the spade writhed helplessly towards the edge of the heaped earth, where two beetles with black and red wings rested on a blade of grass in motionless apathy.

'Good soil for wine,' said the man.

The woman had crossed her arms on her breast and looked away, across the plain.

The man watched her intently. 'We need a lot of money,' he said, almost apologetically. 'The roof had to be repaired and new gates made. And we shan't sell the wine before the winter. But then—it's good work.'

'You like it, don't you?' she asked and followed with her eyes a flock of geese marching to the river on the far side of the village. Four of the geese were theirs, those in the middle, and next spring they would begin to lay.

'Yes, I like it. Makes you feel good. Slowly we are sinking our roots so that the first wind shan't blow us away.'

'They say that many will leave in the winter,' she replied. She did not want him to see that she was uneasy.

'So they will,' he agreed. 'But gradually, one by one, we'll strike root. We are all of us from different parts, we have each our own speech, but our children will all speak the same dialect. People will hear them and say "They come from the village of So-and-so. That's where they wear skirts of this or that colour." That'll be *our* village and after a while people will forget that we have arrived here only recently, into empty farmsteads, empty stables and mildewy cellars.'

She looked at him as he cut his bread and cheese, and if it had not been so obvious she would have said that he was right. A farm labourer a year ago, he had made her a farmer's wife. From one day to another. He had come out of the pub with his hat pushed back, his black curly hair flopping down over his forehead, flushed, and caught her by the arm. We'll go away from here, he had said. We'll go and farm among the vineyards in the south. And then he'd stopped short. You know, he'd said, into an empty village where there's not a soul. And then he'd added quickly that there were a whole bunch of them going together, hardly fifteen miles from the town, and if they both of them got down to work . . . And to-day the

grapes were already ripening in the vineyards, the houses had new coats of paint, blue, yellow and white, three shops had been opened down by the road, and once a week the general stores man came round to the village, laid out his goods on a table knocked up crudely from a few boards, and did business. Ribbons of all colours, shirts for the children, socks, buttons and boot laces.

Someone was now heard singing along the path. Probably he was walking through the vineyards, his hands in his pockets, looking at the sky in which there was not even the sign of a cloud. Just as it was yesterday, and the day before, and as it would be to-morrow, and the day after, and maybe for quite a number of days. Then the wine would be sweeter still and the grapes even stickier between the fingers, and that was why the man sang. One morning the carts would come jolting along the road and turn and creak up into the slopes, the small horses panting uphill, their sharp hooves striking the pebbles in the rutted track, while the women, bent low, would slowly advance across the vineyards, with their hands groping below the leaves of the vines.

She stood listening to the voice along the path until it was lost in the midday heat, and wished that her husband should look at her again because it seemed to her that she was now much more beautiful than a moment before. She felt the warmth on her hips, the rising and falling breath of her breasts—as though the gaze of a passing young man had alighted on them—and in her confusion she tried hastily to say some words which would embrace every one of these emotions.

‘We must have some more children,’ she declared and began to laugh.

The man finished his last mouthful and put his knife away in his pocket. ‘Yes, we must,’ he agreed. ‘There’s lots of work wants doing.’ He got up and wiped his hands on his trousers. ‘Now I’ll get this job done,’ he said and gripped the spade once more. It rang out against a stone

in the soil and cut deep into the heavy earth. As he bent forward he cast a sidelong glance at his wife's legs, planted firmly in the grass and wild thyme. Then he watched her bend down to pick up the basket, saw her hair fall over her face, and with a kind of humility observed her standing tall over his bent working posture. He straightened his back and said: 'Stay till I've finished.'

She hesitated, but then said contentedly: 'If you want me to . . .'

She did not think, but only felt that she was standing there tied up below the huge vault of the sky, at the world's edge, which was bounded by the sloping vineyards on the one side and the purple heat that hung over the green and rust-coloured plain on the other. She could not do anything except stand and listen to the regular clash of spade against stone dying away in the vast silence, and feel more and more fiercely how her presence and the life of her body was rousing desire.

Down in the village, in the church steeple, a bell began to toll. Its clangs were clearly audible, as they sped up the hillside and spread all over the landscape as if they were reflected from the blue sky. A flight of birds streaked up from a garden in the distance and circled around like a black net borne on the wind.

'They've started,' said the woman. Holding her basket with one hand, she used the other to pull over her hair the shawl which had slipped down on to her shoulders.

'Yes, they've started,' said the man and stopped working. He leaned on his spade and looked down towards the village.

'Time I went home.'

He stood gazing a little longer, then he thrust the spade into the soil and stretched out his hand. Mechanically, she caught it and helped him up.

'Right, you go home,' he said and turned with satisfaction to the job he had done. 'I'll come home through the vineyard and get you a few grapes.'

She saw that he was contented and kissed him.

Then she said: 'Stores man's coming to-morrow. We'll buy the boy a shirt.'

'Yes,' he said. 'We'll buy him a shirt and a whistle. Or a mouth organ if it's not too dear.'

'He'll be blowing it all the time and the baby won't get any sleep,' she replied, but she did not really mean it.

He laughed and let her go. He looked at her as she walked over to the path with light steps and watched her hips swaying under the cheerfully coloured skirt.

Then he turned and sat on a low stone wall. He startled a small lizard which slipped into a crack between two stones and from its shady hiding-place watched him through a pair of black eyes. The bell in the steeple was still tolling. On the murky mirror of the river the geese were slowly sailing towards the shady bend below the willows.

When he looked down the path again he could already see the procession pushing uphill with slow steps. In front walked a boy with a crucifix. Behind him the priest with the prayer book in his hands, then came another boy swinging the censer, and then the men who carried the coffin on their shoulders. Behind them followed a crowd in black, the women with their shawls drawn tightly over their heads, the men with their hats in their hands, the eyes of all of them riveted to the ground. They stepped deliberately and silently, accompanied by the breathless tolling from the village below, and the boy with the small crucifix, looking around himself with dignity, led them safely to their destination.

The man had abandoned his place on the cemetery wall and was flicking the dust off his trousers. He walked lightly over to the heap of loose earth and picked up his spade. With it he walked a little distance away, to the next foot-path, and there he waited until they would call him to finish his job.

PENGUIN PARADE

Edited by J. E. Morpurgo

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